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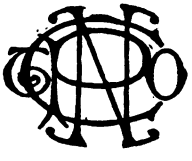
THE MYSTERIES *of the* ZÍMNIY DVÓRETZ

CHARLES·W·PAFFLOW

KD #290

THE MYSTERIES OF THE ZÍMNIY DVÓRETZ

(WINTER PALACE)



THE MYSTERIES OF THE ZÍMNIY DVÓRETZ

(WINTER PALACE)

A RUSSIAN HISTORICAL NOVEL

BY

CHARLES W. PAFFLOW

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PROLOGUE

Even before the outbreak of the present war Russian affairs attracted a more universal interest than those of any other country in Europe. The sad story of Finland, the fear of Norway and Sweden, the migration to East Prussia, intrigues with the Danubian principalities and the Austrian Slavs, the massacres of Kishinev, the German-Bagdad railway, the tripartite struggle for the Persian Gulf, and the irrepressible conflict with Great Britain—these made up an aggregate which commanded attention from all quarters, leaving out of the question all relations with Japan.

Count Muraviév gives the Russian aim and ideal in the following language:

"I believe that Russia has a civilizing mission such as no other people in the world, not only in Asia, but also in Europe. * * * We Russians bear upon our shoulders the New Age; we come to relieve the 'tired men.'"

All Russia's great statesmen, generals, scholars, and literateurs are penetrated with the same idea. Russia is to carry civilization and enlightenment to China, rescue India from British tyranny, and give peace and contentment to the harried proletariat of western Europe. This seems strange to us who are

accustomed to associate all that is Russian with the knouting of women, the mines of Siberia, the blue pencil of the press censor, and a vast empire at the mercy of one man's will. But the Russians are sincere; and if we reflect upon the hereditary genius of the Slavs for co-operative institutions, as opposed to the direct opposite tendency of the West, there may be more in Russia's claim than is apparent at first sight. With all the superficial veneer of Western culture, there is a cancer eating at its heart. It is not a natural growth. It is maintained by bayonets, policemen's clubs, and obscurant education. Russia is sound at the core; it has a vigorous and wholesome internal life; it is a nation where the development comes spontaneously and in the order of nature. It is only the exterior and the temporary which is harsh, repellant, arbitrary, and brutal.

Not even Count Muraviév would undertake to point out the path by which this mission is to be achieved. The difficulties in the way appear insurmountable, and most sober thinkers outside of Russia would pronounce it a fanatic's dream. But it is at least something to have a great ideal; it is more when a whole nation shares in it. No other European nation has such a dream. France did have such an one and cherished it, and was realizing it, until the personal ambition of the first Napoleon ended it. It is to be remembered, too, that men build better than they know. And with an ideal, the next immediate step is more easily determined upon, and the end pursued with confidence and vigor. This explains all the secrets of Russian diplomacy since it has had a diplomacy.

Russia undoubtedly lags very far in the rear, if measured by what the West calls civilization. The renaissance and the religious revolution of the sixteenth century did not cause a ripple of disturbance in Muscovy. Even the French Revolution was totally without effect. These are not the kinds of revolutions to which the Slavonic mind turns. It is practical and economical. In addition to this, Europe had already enjoyed three hundred years of culture, when the Russians were still under the barbarian. At the time of the renaissance the Tartar still ruled, and it was a hundred years later when the Mussulman was driven from the Volga. After the Tartar had disappeared, the old régime of Asiatic darkness and blood was continued under the iron rule of the independent princes. It was not until toward the close of the eighteenth century, when civil and religious liberty had been won in England a hundred years, that Peter the Great made his appearance, and modern Russia began, in a feeble way, to exist.

The war in progress between Russia and Japan has created an eager desire in the minds of Americans to learn something more specific and satisfactory about social and political conditions now existing in the Tsar's empire than can be gleaned from newspapers and magazines.

It is to furnish this precise information that this thrilling story is given to the public. Though the scene is laid in the time of Nicholas I., fifty and more years ago, yet the exact similarity of the state of affairs at that time with that of the present is a won-

derful phenomenon. Nicholas I. was a reactionist, following a ruler of liberal tendencies. This is also true with regard to the present Tsar, Nicholas II., who, although the immediate successor of Alexander III., was expected to carry out the reforms begun by his grandfather, Alexander II.

Russia was humiliated and apparently ground to the earth in the Crimean war; the same thing is now happening for the second time. Will the present crisis in Russia be followed by the same consequences which followed the crisis of half a century ago?

A close observance of Russian habits of thought, modes of life, of the dense ignorance on the one hand, with its superstitious devotion to the priest and to the Tsar; and of the lofty ideals of the intellectuals and their self-sacrificing spirit to attain them on the other, will aid us to form an opinion.

This story throws a flood of light in dark places which have never yet been illuminated. It is a compilation from Russian literary sources recently published in Berlin, Germany, in the Russian language, and smuggled over into Russia, where it has produced a profound impression.

The Russian style of literary composition is very different from that to which we are accustomed. In fact, it is often harsh and repellant. The present work is especially elliptical and jerky in the original. I have, therefore, allowed myself great liberty in its construction, changing the form here, cutting out at one place, and adding in at another, always, however, endeavoring to hold fast to the characteristic Russian form of expression.

One word more. This story covers the most interesting period of Russian history, if we except that which is now making. The important facts stated have really taken place, and all the characters have lived in the flesh and acted as here represented. Some of them are still living.

CHARLES W. PAFFLOW.

Washington, D. C., December, 1904.

PART FIRST

PART FIRST

CHAPTER I

A STORMY NIGHT IN ST. PETERSBURG

A fierce gale was blowing from the west, blocking and reversing the motion of the waters of Lake Ladoga, which sought their natural outlet into the Baltic Sea. The waves lashed furiously and broke in foaming crests, and turned back from the vain struggle to overpower the storm and break through the mouth of the Neva. Heaped up into great lumps and ridges, and driven by a constantly increasing force and momentum, they overleaped the craggy banks and poured in floods over the high inclosures of the Palace and the English Quay, and the discolored torrents of the Moyka and the Fontanka inundated the neighboring streets.

The signal gun of the Petropávlovsk Fortress again and again thundered forth the announcement of the gradual rising of the water. At the top of the Admiralty Building a signal had been hoisted. In the lower and threatened districts of the city intense anxiety was manifest. In fright and confusion people were running and shrieking and trying

to save their portable belongings. In the higher sections the panic stricken, motley crowds were making the sign of the cross because the dread prophecy that St. Petersburg would be destroyed in the third overflow of the Neva seemed to be on the point of fulfillment. Only the great bronze equestrian statue of Peter the Great in the Admiralty Square appeared unmoved in the general terror. His hand is outstretched to the waves, as if issuing a command to them to retire, but they hear him not.

At one of the windows of the Winter Palace stood a tall man, absorbed in thought, casting a challenging glance over the wild waters of the Neva, as if threatening the elements.

To him insubordination had long ceased to exist; he had long since forgotten what disobedience was. Whenever and wherever he encountered an obstacle to his will, he broke it like a straw or crushed it with his foot as one crushes an insect. But now hostile troops have invaded his dominions, have besieged his great fortifications, and his three million soldiers are unable to repel the invaders. The vast granite works, his pride and suppositious security, lie powerless before a despised foe. The generals—mere marionettes moved by his indomitable will—on whom he relied have proved themselves unequal to their tasks. And now, at the time our story begins, nature itself dared to rebel against him. In his impotent rage he clenched his hands and exclaimed:

"Treacherous elements! Is the West to conquer you also? No; at least while I live the East shall remain unconquerable! What did I say? Ah!

this thought has occurred to me more than once. No, I must not outlive defeat; and it must not take me by surprise."

A cold and proud but hopeless smile spread over his lips, and he whispered to himself in despair:

"Never!"

"Never!" repeated an echo of his own thoughts. The chamberlain opened the door.

"Your Majesty, a courier from the Crimea."

"Let him enter," sharply ordered the monarch. As he heard the announcement and gave the order, the blood rushed to his face, and a bright red color succeeded the marble paleness of his cheeks. His antique face twitched nervously from involuntary impatience.

The courier—an officer of the Yégersky Regiment—entered.

A ten-days' journey had so worn him down that he could barely keep on his feet. He wished to speak, but, dizzy from exhaustion and excitement, he was obliged to brace himself on a chair to keep from falling.

"What news?" asked Nicholas in a commanding tone.

The courier mechanically took a dispatch from his pouch, which he handed to the Emperor.

Without reading it, the Tsar threw the dispatch disdainfully on the table.

"I ask thee what news thou bringest, in simple Russian speech; dost thou not understand me?"

The Tsar's voice, which caused the boldest to tremble, brought the courier out of his daze. But

nature has its rights. A ten-days' journey on horseback, with many relays, will bring down the strongest constitution.

"Your Majesty—" articulated the courier.

Advancing two steps, the Emperor seized the officer in his powerful grasp and shook him angrily.

"Matvéyev, dost thou not know who I am? I ask thee once more what is happening in the Crimea?"

Matvéyev lowered his head in silence. The pallor of the Tsar's face changed to red again.

"Ah, bad news again? And Vrevsky?"

"Baron Vrevsky is dead!"

"Dead? And the battle?"

"The battle at the Black River—"

"What, not lost?"

"Yes, Your Majesty! His excellency Adjutant-General Baron Vrevsky was fighting at the side of General Dannenberg. Both seemed to court death."

"Well, what happened?"

"The adjutant-general alone fell, and he commissioned me to transmit the sad intelligence to Your Imperial Highness."

The Emperor rang the bell.

The chamberlain entered.

"Let Officer Matvéyev be conducted to the fortress for a month for rest and recuperation; but see to it that he does not talk," added the Emperor in a whisper.

The officer bowed in silence and left the room. In the vestibule he met another courier, also an

officer and his friend, all covered with mud and scarcelv to be recognized.

"Where dost thou come from, Ostróvsky?" asked Matvéyev.

"From the Caucasus," replied the newly arrived courier.

Matvéyev regarded him with a questioning glance. Ostróvsky sank his head, raising his eyes at the same time to his friend. The latter shrugged his shoulders. Ostróvsky understood him and entered the presence of the monarch with a sinking heart. He, too, was the messenger of evil news.

"Whence art thou?" asked the Tsar in a loud voice before the courier had crossed the threshold of the cabinet.

"From Asia Minor," answered Ostróvsky, bowing low and handing a package to the Emperor, which the latter quickly unsealed and read the following:

"Your Majesty," wrote Muravyév-Karsky, "in obedience to your orders, we attacked Kars and were repulsed with a fearful loss. My opinion that Kars was impregnable has unfortunately been confirmed.

"Yesterday, when the adjutant-general delivered to me Your Imperial Highness' command to attack Kars, I asked him not to mention the matter to any one until evening, when I had summoned a council of war. The council was unanimous against an attack, which it deemed not only hopeless, but even useless, since the blockaded city would be obliged to surrender in the course of a few weeks from famine. The adjutant-general listened to the expressed

opinions and remained silent. It then became my duty to lay before the council the order of Your Imperial Highness. I said:

" 'Gentlemen, it is the order of the Emperor that Kars be attacked. At 5 o'clock to-morrow our storming columns will move on the fortifications. Let us prove to His Imperial Highness that we gladly lay down our lives when ordered by him to die.'

"And we have shown that we know how to die for the Tsar and the fatherland, since 19,000 of Your Majesty's choicest troops fell upon the battlefield and the precipices of Kars. Unfortunately, I was spared, and, hence, upon me is imposed the sad duty of communicating to Your Imperial Highness this grievous intelligence."

While the Emperor was mechanically running over the dispatch, the signal gun continued to boom at regular intervals.

As the waves of the Baltic were threatening the capital, so the allied powers were menacing the Empire from all sides. Resistance was unsuccessful. The forts—the Emperor's pride and hope—were powerless to arrest the advance of the enemy, and the imperial troops had been defeated in the open field. Sebastopol, the pearl of the southern strongholds, was still holding out, not owing to its granite walls, erected at the cost of nearly one hundred millions, but to the earth breastworks, hurriedly thrown up by an insignificant captain, the son of a foreign tradesman.*

*This refers to General Todtleben, who was the son of a tobacco manufacturer of the city of Reval, in the Baltic Provinces.

But can it hold out much longer? If not to-day, then to-morrow a courier may bring the news of its fall. Like a desperate gambler, the Emperor staked all on a single card by sending an adjutant-general to the Crimea with instructions for an immediate and decisive battle.

The battle was fought near the Black Sea. The English were driven back to the water's edge. Fortune again seemed to smile on the Russians; victory was about to perch on the standards of the brave Moscow troops, when Bosquet suddenly appeared with his Zouaves.

The English were saved; the Russians were repulsed and driven back to the precipitous cliffs, where many fell to their death and the remainder were cut down mercilessly by the enemy. According to eye-witnesses, the Black River was all red with blood in those ill-fated hours.

Muravyév had invested Kars, in Asia Minor.

The Emperor sought to divert the attention of Europe from the disasters in the Crimea and to overwhelm the allies by a brilliant stroke, at the same time rousing and inspiring the national spirit. For these reasons he had ordered the attack on Kars. A council of war was called at St. Petersburg, to which the old Count Paskévich, who had taken Kars in 1829, was summoned. The entire council was opposed to the attack, with Count Paskévich at the head of the opposition.

"Hast thou not taken Kars?" sharply asked the Tsar of the Count.

"I repeat, sire, that the fortress is impregnable, and can only be taken by starving the inhabitants. True, I have taken it once, but this was not accomplished with iron, but with gold. If Your Imperial Highness sends such metal to Muravyév, Kars will be at your feet," was the candid reply of the old soldier.

The Tsar, however, did not send the gold to Muravyév, but an order to attack at once. The Emperor heartily disliked Muravyév because the latter, in a sham battle in which he commanded one side and the Emperor the other, had been guilty of the impudence of capturing the Tsar with his entire staff. Those who knew Nicholas, knew well that he never forgave such offenses. Muravyév was sent to Asia Minor as commander-in-chief on account of his personal popularity among the troops and to please public sentiment. But the brilliant victory with which the Tsar hoped to surprise all of his subjects, inspiring them to new sacrifices, was turned into the ashes of defeat and an enormous and useless slaughter.

The thoughts of the proud autocrat became darker than the angry night which was covering the raging waves of the Neva. Success, which smiled on him in the course of thirty years, not failing once, produced in his mind deceptive visions of absolutism and of lasting glory and power, in which he himself came to have complete confidence. Up to the outbreak of the Crimean war he deemed himself as specially called to decide the fate of the whole of Europe. He regarded himself as a colossus to

whom were turned the eyes of the German princes, begging protection. And now—

Another report from the fortress gun caused the Emperor to start, and interrupted his thoughts. He became oblivious, not noticing the presence of the courier or recalling the news brought by him.

"What dost thou want?" cried the monarch angrily. "Who art thou?"

But before the officer had time to answer, Nicholas recovered himself and recalled the dreadful report the courier had made.

"Ah, yes; I know. On the morrow thou shalt return to Asia Minor, and now go and rest. Thou hast brought me sad news; thou wilt therefore remain before Kars until thou shalt bring me an account of its fall. Now go! Yet, stop. Where is the messenger from the Crimea? Very well," he added, after a momentary reflection, "I know now. Order that he be returned here!"

Ostróvsky saluted and took his leave. Matvéyev was still in the palace guardhouse, as it was not possible to cross the Neva in the face of the storm. On his reappearance before the Emperor he was ordered to return to the Crimea on the next day.

Nicholas did not spare his soldiers, supposing them to be possessed of the same iron constitution as himself.

Upon the departure of the officer, the Tsar sank into a chair and listened mechanically to the crash and roar of the tempest without. He rose precipitately from his seat and rang for the chamberlain.

"Have Karrel summoned!" he ordered in a hollow voice.

Again the fortress gun boomed. The storm was cutting its way into the imperial chamber, bursting open windows with such force that the glass was shattered into bits and fell jingling to the floor.

The monarch remained calm. The storm which was raging in his soul obliged him to forget the threatening waters. He went to an open window and looked out. The waves, with constantly increasing fury, continued to beat against the granite banks, dashing their foam high up against the barriers. The reports from the signal gun came with greater frequency.

"If Napier should take advantage of this storm and slip by the Kronstadt fortifications in the darkness of this night, St. Petersburg would be lost," thought the Emperor. At the same time there awoke in him the blind faith in his unchangeable good fortune, and, throwing a challenging glance at the sky, he soliloquized:

"He won't dare, for even if he does find among the swine herders a vile wretch who would be willing to pilot him, the mines would destroy his fleet. My star has not yet set; it only hides behind the clouds; it may be darkened but not extinguished. The storm will scatter the clouds, and the moon will soon illuminate nature with its silvery rays. So my star, which for thirty years has continuously led to victory, will again beam in brightness. Yes; my destiny is sure. The lion is not yet subdued; on the contrary, he is only sharpening his teeth and claws

to be the better able to tear. Rapacious England! I vow to destroy thee if I emerge victorious from this conflict. I will teach thee!" he added, menacing the South with his index finger.

The chamberlain opened the door and announced: "Privy Councilor Karrel!"

The Emperor's favorite private physician was ushered in.

Nicholas did not observe his entrance. He was watching the battle of the waves, which pictured to his imagination his own war with the allied powers. He turned and beheld the sad face of his physician.

"Ah, it is thou, Karrel. I have sent for thee, for I am ill."

The physician would feel his pulse, but Nicholas withdrew his hand.

"No; that will reveal nothing to thee; my disease has its seat deep in my heart . . . Tell me, how much longer have I to live?"

The doctor looked at the Tsar.

"Sire, human life is in the hands of God."

"And in a measure in our own," added the Emperor.

The doctor was overcome. He understood the meaning of his sovereign's words, but he was afraid to allow himself to admit that he did understand it.

"I have reigned longer than any of my predecessors," he continued, "and it is time to rest. My friends, the English, are of the same opinion," he added with an ironical smile. "They are determined not to lay down arms until I shall have vacated the throne. But thou, Karrel, dost know me and there-

fore dost understand that I shall part with the crown only when I part with life.

"Fate called me to the throne to which I was not born the heir.* I have held the reins of government with a strong hand, destroying everything that dared oppose me. The German princes looked upon me as their protector, and I could have regarded them almost as my vassals. But now, the ground is trembling under my feet."

The last words were uttered in a voice scarcely audible. The Tsar was again immersed in gloomy thoughts, and for a while remained silent. Then, as if awaking from a sleep, he turned to Karrel with the question:

"How long have I yet to live?"

"Sire, I can but repeat what I already had the honor to state, that human life is in the hands of God. The physician who presumes to fix its duration for a healthy man is either a knave or a fool. No one who does not know Your Majesty's age would believe you to be sixty years old. You will live many years yet for the welfare of Russia."

"If I do not die for her salvation!"

These words were uttered by the Emperor involuntarily. He did not realize their import. They were followed by a silence which to the doctor seemed to last an age.

---

*By the law of primogeniture Alexander's successor should have been Constantine, the eldest of his brothers, but in order to marry the Countess Groudzinska, Constantine had, in 1822, declared to his brother his intention of renouncing the crown. The Emperor had accepted the renunciation and named Nicholas, Paul's third son, to succeed him.

The Emperor walked up and down the room with bowed head. The wind was finding its way into the cabinet through the open windows and the signal gun was discharged again and again with long and loud reverberations. At last the Tsar stopped before his physician and calmly asked him:

"What poison kills in a few days without causing much suffering and without leaving its traces?"

The doctor remained silent.

"I ask thee!" shouted Nicholas.

"Sire—" Karrel tried to speak, but could only murmur unintelligibly.

Recovering at last his customary habit of acting decisively, he made the following evasive reply:

"There are many kinds of poison . . . but the science of toxicology has not yet been sufficiently explored to enable one to—"

Nicholas, having again fallen into his reveries, failed to hear the answer, and asked abruptly:

"Does prussic acid or nicotine have an immediate effect?"

The doctor nodded his head affirmatively.

"Then these will not answer the purpose," continued the Tsar, as if talking to himself. "I must not die suddenly; it would cause too much gossip. I must first be ill. What are the effects of strychnine? I understand that it is absorbed by the blood."

The doctor was silent.

"Am I not asking thee a question?"

"Sire—"

"Answer my question briefly and to the point. Do not waste words."

"Sometimes—"

"Well, then, that will answer the purpose; no traces or almost none. Its action is slow, and the patient dies gradually, and without losing consciousness."

Karrel nodded his head affirmatively.

Nicholas resumed his walk around the room. From time to time he halted before the doctor, regarding him in silence, and then continued his walk. Finally he stopped and whispered so low that his words were scarcely audible to himself:

"Karrel, I must have strychnine."

The doctor turned ashen pale; the blood rushed to his heart; he could scarcely breathe. He wished to speak, but could not utter a word.

Meanwhile Nicholas left him, and stationed himself at the window, gazing on the wild scene without.

"The South will conquer, after all," he said. Then, turning to the doctor:

"I must have the poison. Bring it to me tomorrow."

The faithful servant sank to his knees at the feet of his sovereign. Great tears trickled down his cheeks. He grasped the Emperor's hand, covering it with kisses, and articulated with difficulty:

"Sire, what do you intend to do?"

Nicholas threw upon him a cold and disdainful glance, saying:

"Since when do people dare to ask me questions?"

The tears which were choking the physician prevented a reply.

Nicholas continued with emotion:

"Thou hast served me many years; thou hast accompanied me in all my travels; thou hast seen that I had only to give a sign to make all my subjects prostrate themselves and obey me.

"Is it possible that thou, my faithful servant, wouldst wish that I should lay down my crown, and that, as in the fable, the ass should kick the lion? Dost thou wish that those who trembled before me should delight in my downfall?"

Karrel was still at the feet of the Tsar, but Nicholas raised him up, saying:

"Enough, Karrel; be a man. To-morrow thou must bring me the poison, and I promise thee that I shall resort to it only when I am compelled by fate."

Karrel found courage to say:

"Sire, we physicians are in duty bound to restore health to the sick as far as science has given us the power; but our calling forbids the taking of life."

Observing the angry look in the autocrat's eyes, the physician continued:

"Sire, obedience has its limits. If Your Imperial Highness should decree that I die for you, I would die joyfully, exulting in the privilege. Think, sire, of the Empress, your consort; think of your children and your people. Consider that I have sworn to preserve your life, even at the sacrifice of my own; and yet you demand death at my hands!" And he once more threw himself at the Emperor's feet.

The Emperor went to the window, placed his hot brow against the frosty air, and was refreshed. He returned to the physician and said in an austere but affectionate tone:

"Stand up, thou foolish man. Who says that I want to die now. But no one can tell what may happen."

"For a sovereign who is supported by such a devoted people as the Russians no such emergency can arise, and nothing approximating it can ever be possible," interrupted the doctor. "Russians will lay down their lives for their Tsar to the last living soul. Remember the year 1812. The enemy may take a few forts; he may wreak his vengeance by burning unprotected seaside towns; he may—"

"Enough empty phrases! Remember my order!" With these words the Tsar turned his back to the physician and went away.

Trembling and heart-broken, the doctor rose and followed the Emperor. He was intrusted with a dreadful secret, and he knew his sovereign too well to indulge the hope that he could prevail on him to change his determination.

CHAPTER II

THE FORTUNE TELLER

In the Kolomna district of St. Petersburg there is a quarter known as "Boloto" (mud). Only ten years since this quarter was lined with rows of small and dirty *lachug* (hovels) along unpaved streets. In the rainy season the mud made this section impassable, and in dry weather the dust obscured the sun's rays.

This evening Boloto amply justified its name. The Neva, having poured over its banks, overflowed this low section and made canals of the streets, into which neither pedestrians nor vehicles dared to venture, which latter, however, were seldom seen in this neighborhood. Most of these miserable huts were in complete darkness, as their occupants, for the most part mechanics and petty officials, after hiding their petty goods in the garrets, sought refuge in the higher parts of the city.

In one of the meanest and dirtiest of the hovels a dim light was shimmering through the bluish paper serving the purpose of window glass. From time to time its dull reddish light was observable, which by turns flickered and vanished.

Had any one entered this kennel he would have witnessed a strange spectacle. Along the walls of the small room, which were covered with cheap paper, were narrow benches, such as may be found in the huts of peasants. A wooden table stood in

the center, upon which was burning a tallow candle in an iron candlestick, and around which were scattered in confusion greasy cards and dirty cups containing coffee grounds.

One would look in vain for the usual cross or ikon* in the red corner. Near the clay stove, in which burned a few chips, sat an old woman boiling coffee in a tin saucepan. She gave no heed to the storm.

Occasionally she would throw a few more chips into the fire, and her figure, lighted up by the blaze, reminded one of a witch, to which appearance her fantastic costume greatly added. Her head was covered with a red handkerchief, and over her left shoulder was suspended a yellow shawl, with a red border, falling in long folds around her waist.

At times she would jump up, whirl round in the room, and sing in a hollow voice some weird melody. Then she would again sit down before the fireplace and in silence watch the boiling coffee. She would pour the coffee into one cup and the sediments into another, after first carefully washing them both. Then she would look at the grounds, while slowly sipping the coffee. The longer she looked, the more demoniacal became the expression on her face. Suddenly she burst out in idiotic laughter and hurled the cup containing the grounds into a corner, breaking it in pieces. Then, raging like a tiger that sniffed the scent of blood, she threw herself into a

*A Russian home is incomplete without an image of the Savior, the Virgin, or the patron saint of the house shining in the rays of a lamp, always illuminated, in a corner of the apartment. This image is called *ikon*.

wild dance, screeching a grewsome song, in the ill-fated words of which was the prediction of her own death in a few hours, and that in her last moments she would enjoy sweet revenge on an enemy.

This woman was the far-famed fortune teller Marfúsha, known as the "Witch of Kiev." While she was thus engaged a woman entered the room unnoticed, who, astonished at the conduct of the uncanny creature, stopped at the door. She was beautiful, about twenty-five years old, dressed plainly, but in good taste, though the evidence of the storm was visible in her attire. Her feet were wet through, and although wrapped in a warm shawl, she shook from the cold. Her face was pale, the wonderful black eyes sparkled through her tears, and at times her lips twitched nervously. It could not have been mere curiosity that brought her in such weather to such a place. Probably she came to seek consolation, or perhaps to find means of safety from threatening danger.

Marfúsha continued to dance and sing, without noticing her visitor until she stumbled against her.

"Thou hast come to learn thy fate?" squeaked the hag. "I need not ask the cards; thy fate is written on thy face. Let me see thy hand."

She drew the stranger to the table, snuffed the candle, and examined her hand attentively and long. She then looked into the woman's face, fastening her blinking eyes on it so keenly that she nearly swooned under the examination. Drawing her hand close to the candle, the witch suddenly let it drop, and pushing the stranger aside she cried:

"Thou hast dared come to me? Thou hast the audacity to come here to weep? Siberia? Well, what if it be so? He will not be hanged! Thou wilt be spared the sight of his body dangling in the air surrounded by croaking crows. Fortunate one, thou wilt not see him in death!"

Terrified and almost deprived of her senses as she was, the young woman listened eagerly to the old crone's rambling talk. She desired to ask something, but could find no adequate words to express the agony of her heart. Her hostess, however, appeared to read her thoughts, and continued:

"My little dove sighs for her mate? She desires to know whither he has deserted her? Yes; he has a new love! And he nestles with her."

These words entered the young woman's soul like a dart of death. She turned ghastly pale and cold, and the tears froze on her cheek.

She recovered herself and said:

"Have pity on me, Marfúsha! Do not kill me with thy cruel words. Take everything I possess; only tell me the truth."

She threw on the table her well-filled purse, bracelets, brooch, and was in the act of taking off her rings, when Marfúsha checked her and disdainfully pushed away the money and jewelry.

"Keep thy treasures," she said roughly. "The fortune teller, who is to die within an hour, has no need of them."

The stranger appeared not to understand. The anguish of suspense had impaired her reason.

"And so thou wouldst know where thy beloved is? This is what brought thee here, is it not? Thou seest, I know much; I know all. To the dying is given the power of forecasting future events and to know the past and present. Thy husband's former love for thee has yielded to other charms. He has forsaken thee."

The unhappy young woman felt her knees tottering. She cast a look of despair upon the fortune teller and sank unconscious on the bench.

"Calm thyself, my child," resumed Marfúsha tenderly. "It is not a woman that has supplanted thee in thy husband's heart."

"What is it, then?" whispered the young woman, again recovering.

"This passion is of such a nature that all who are seized by it find death. Thy husband, also, will die for his love."

"But what is this affection?" cried the stranger.

"The fatherland!" replied the old woman, wiping away her involuntary tears.

The clatter of horses' hoofs splashing through the mud became audible.

The fortune teller bounded from her seat and raised the young woman from the bench with a force and haste that was incredible in one so feeble.

Into this closet, quick! He must not see thee, for thy husband's salvation. Quick, quick! I say—it is he!"

With these words she pushed the young woman into a dark closet and bolted the door.

CHAPTER III

THE EMPEROR'S VISIT TO THE FORTUNE TELLER

Pretending not to observe the newly arrived visitor, the witch turned to the fireplace, threw on some chips and put some coffee into the saucepan, to which she added some water, and set it on the fire to boil. While thus engaged a tall man, wrapped in an old army mantle,* entered the room. The old woman knew he was present, but gave no sign, and busied herself with the coffee.

The officer looked at her several times, in a way which showed plainly enough that he was not accustomed to wait; then, stamping the floor, he impatiently called:

"How now, hag, hast thou turned deaf and blind?"

Marfúsha looked up and stared at her new caller, but her face indicated neither fear nor surprise.

"Thou hast come to learn how much longer thou wilt live. Very well; listen then: Before spring returns, thy days will be numbered. First I, then thou, will rest in the grave. Yes, poison! Not in wine, but in poison wilt thou find forgetfulness!"

*Nicholas I. nearly always wore the military coat of his deceased brother, and which Alexander I. had also worn during the war with Napoleon.

Did she utter these words at hazard, or did she penetrate to the depth of his secret thoughts? He stared at her in surprise, but not a muscle of his face moved.

"You won't mind, *batyushka*,* to wait until the coffee is made, not because I wish to offer you a cup, which you would not refuse if you knew it to contain poison. . . . Meanwhile I will lay out the cards."

At the word "poison" the officer paled perceptibly, but at the allusion to the cards he nodded approvingly.

The witch snuffed the candle, sat down at the table, and, inviting the officer to sit opposite, said:

"Don't be perturbed; though a bench is not a throne, it is much safer and far more peaceful."

The officer sat down. The witch shuffled the cards after the rules of the art.

"Dost thou hear the sound of the bugle? It is proud of its former victories; it has shown its might to the East! Thine enemies will proceed likewise if—" She became silent. The officer waited long for her to resume, and then asked impatiently:

"If what? Speak, hag, what dost thou mean?"

She continued to shuffle the cards, scanning them closely.

"The cards do not reveal the future; they deal only with past events, which thou hast perhaps quite forgotten. While the coffee is getting ready, which

*An endearing adjective, meaning "little father," indifferently used by Russians.

will tell me thy future, let me show thee the secrets of the past by the cards."

She looked at the cards.

"The five of spades means five victims whom thou hast hanged—"

"Hag!" shrieked the officer.

The fortune teller did not heed him and proceeded quietly:

"One of the five martyrs had a little daughter, a pretty blonde. She was aroused one morning by an unusual noise. This noise was caused by the police, who had come to place seals on the remaining property of the widow and orphan, since the court, after having condemned the father to the gallows, confiscated all his estate, and left the family destitute.

"Since that day mother and daughter eked out a miserable existence in wretched poverty. And, as if this were not enough, they were imprisoned in a convent by administrative order—"

"Silence, hag!" shouted the officer.

Without noticing his remark she continued:

"By imperial order they were made to suffer every conceivable humiliation, insult, and agony. The wife and daughter, like the husband and father who died for the cause of freedom, would have preferred death to their lives of degrading slavery. They made their escape, and the convent keepers, fearing the consequences of their carelessness, reported that the two women were dead.

"Death and oblivion is one and the same in Holy Russia, and the two unfortunates were soon forgotten. The mother was barely able to earn a living,

and they lived in the direst poverty, but bore their lot bravely—they were at least free. This freedom was not to last long.

"One day the mother, on returning home, found her Anyúta missing. In vain did she call and search; her child was gone. Gedeónov, who had reached a high estate by becoming a secret procurer for his sovereign—"

The visitor was aroused. His eyebrows were knitted, the veins on his forehead were inflated, his fists were clenched, and he restrained himself with difficulty from attacking the old woman, who, without raising her eyes from the cards, proceeded with her story:

"Gedeónov saw Anyúta on the street; he properly estimated the value of her beauty and anticipated the new favors he might expect from the Tsar if he delivered the prey. With the aid of the police he found out where she lived, and by his directions the girl was kidnapped in the absence of the mother, and placed in a dramatic school—a select harem for the gratification of the monarch.

"The girl, although but sixteen years of age, knew enough not to reveal her real name. When asked what is was, she replied, 'Márya Assénkova!' "

"What! Márya Assénkova?" asked the officer in great excitement.

"Yes; she was the daughter of the ruined Niléyev," replied the old woman in a calm but slightly tremulous voice.

"The girl soon became the belle of the school, not alone on account of her remarkable beauty, but

because of her great talents. Her beauty brought her no happiness, for she was forced to surrender it to him who signed the death warrant of her father. The fruit of this compulsion was a son—"

"Where is the son?" shouted the officer.

The woman did not appear to hear him.

"On the very day of his birth the boy was kidnapped by the girl's mother. Under the guise of a midwife she succeeded in reaching her daughter. She took the boy away that he might serve as a weapon for her vengeance. He is alive now."

"Where is he? Tell me, else I will—!" screamed the officer in a terrible voice, but which did not frighten the narrator.

"The boy is yet alive, but the mother is dead. She died cursing him who dishonored her—the father of her child. The throngs, headed by the Grand Duke Mikhaíl Pávlovich, which followed her fragile remains to the churchyard, did not suspect that the same hand that murdered the father slew also the daughter, and that it was decreed that her son should avenge—"

"Witch, thou knowest too much. Thou must tell me all!" roared the Emperor, seizing her with his iron grip, but she slipped from his grasp like an eel.

"I tell only what the cards say to me. Now we will look into the future by aid of the coffee grounds."

She poured off the coffee, looked curiously into the grounds, and said:

"There shall come happy days for Russia, but not under the present Tsar. His star ascended in blood;

in blood shall it also set. The reign of Nicholas I. shall occupy a dark and blood-stained page in history. The memory of Nicholas will not be blessed, but rather—"

The Emperor had risen from his seat in the meantime. A deathly pallor covered his marble-like features, in which was the expression of a tiger hungry for prey. He seized the woman's shoulder and shook her as a dog shakes a rat.

"Thou knowest too much of the past and thy forecast of the future is too vague. Thou dost not deceive me with thy jugglery. The secret thou possessest will prove thy undoing. Thou hast spoken of the son of Assénkova—I will know his name and where he is. Speak, or—"

"Ask the eagle of the heavens what his name is; ask the prairie wolf whence he comes," was the woman's reply.

"I ask thee for the last time," shouted the Emperor.

"I neither fear thy power nor thy gallows. Dare not to touch one upon whom the hand of Heaven is already laid!" hissed the woman.

"We shall see whether Hell or Heaven is to take thy part; but we shall first find the son of Assénkova. Within the walls of the Patropávlovsk Fortress they will understand how to wring a confession from thee and make thee tell who thou art."

"Who I am!" cried the fortune teller, wresting herself out of the Emperor's clutches.

"Dost thou not recognize in me the woman who crawled at thy feet and begged mercy for her hus-

band? Dost thou not know the woman who was betrayed by kind words to make herself a weapon for his destruction? Neither he nor his companions would ever have confessed had they not been assured through me that they would be pardoned on that condition. What happened? Instead of a pardon, which was promised, they were hanged! Heaven itself rebelled against this treachery; the ropes snapped on three of the victims.* In any other land this would have secured a pardon for political offenders; here, it only aggravated their tortures. I then vowed revenge on their murderers and faithfully did I keep my oath. Ah, thou knowest me not? I am indeed no longer the celebrated beauty of years gone by. Time, grief, and powerless hate have whitened my hair and dug furrows in my face. The lady of the salon has turned into a hag. The widow of Niléyev!"

"Ah! so thou art the widow of the executed Niléyev?" interrupted the Emperor.

"Yes; and the mother of Assénkova!"

The Emperor shuddered. He had been devotedly fond of Assénkova, the star of the Russian stage in the thirties.

Nicholas exceeded Louis XIV. in his affaires d'amour. The latter only had Œil-de-Bœuf, while the former, beside the maids of the Empress whom he would give in marriage to his courtiers and gen-

*Niléyev was the head of the Society of the North. He was condemned to be hanged together with four other conspirators. They did honor to their cause by their courage in facing a penalty made cruel by the awkwardness of the executioners.

erals, maintained a female dramatic school, at the head of which was Gedeónov, the principal procurer of the Emperor, and who reached the highest station in the civil hierarchy, receiving the rank of "Actual Secret Counselor"* of the first class.

The unhappy mother, guided by her boundless love for her daughter, soon discovered her and found a way to penetrate into that school, where she watched her daughter's fate with an eagle eye. Anyúta had long withstood the demands of the Tsar, but her indifference only added fire to his passion. After he had compelled her to yield to his desires and she carried the fruit of his crime under her bosom, his love for her knew no bounds. She gave birth to a much-hoped-for boy, but the child disappeared on the day it was born. An old seamstress also disappeared on that day from her home in the Peskov (sandy) district, and Marfúsha, the fortune teller, settled at the same time in the Boloto district. All the efforts of the secret police to apprehend the midwife proved ineffectual. Márya Assénkova was in love with an actor named Stepánov, but the Emperor's jealousy prevented their union, and the unhappy girl pined and died.

But now fate had overtaken Nicholas! His former love was kindled anew. An overwhelming passion surged in his veins.

He caught Marfúsha by the shoulder and buried his nails in her flesh. She did not wince, but on her face again appeared that demoniac expression.

**Dyestvítelny tayny sovyétnik* is the Russian for this title, and it corresponds to that of general in the army.

To the Emperor's question where his son was, she mockingly replied:

"Thou wouldst know where thy son is? Know, then, that he has been exiled to the same place where the best and noblest sons of Russia are sent. Yes, thou hast banished thy son to Siberia! The child was sent by his father to the Nerchinsk mines to dig gold to pay the cost of his father's lusts! But by the mercy of God, he has come back to avenge on his father the wrongs of his grandfather, his mother, and himself!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Emperor.

"Impossible? Dost thou think, then, that Siberia never gives up its victims? Do not forget that the dead sometimes rise from their graves to avenge themselves on their assassins."

"Thou hast just said that he has returned; tell me where he is!"

"Never! He must avenge his people, and shall not know who his father is until he himself is at the point of death."

"Thou forgettest, old hag, that I can have thee flayed alive."

In place of an answer the woman burst out in an unnatural laugh, vainly endeavoring to free herself from the Tsar's grasp. The Emperor was at his wit's end. Suddenly he hurled the woman from him. She fell against the sharp edge of the stove. Her scalp was badly cut, and she lay in a pool of her blood.

Without observing her condition the Emperor rushed headlong from the room and a minute later

the feet of his horses were heard galloping through the muddy street.

He drove to the first police station. The sentry did not recognize him in the darkness. Changing his mind quickly, he proceeded straight to the palace, thinking to himself:

"No, the common police are unfit for such a commission; the woman is too garrulous. I shall send Dupelt; he knows how to keep his tongue behind his teeth, and will understand also how to keep the old woman from talking."

CHAPTER IV

MARFÚSHA MEETS HER GRANDSON AND DIES

The young woman in the closet could hear the voices of the two speakers, but she could catch only a few broken phrases. At last the voices were hushed. She began to knock on the door, but it was securely bolted from the outside and did not yield. She was seized with terror and began to scream for help.

Just at this moment a young man entered the room. He appeared to be about twenty-one or twenty-two years old. His tall and commanding figure was wrapped in an old *sheenel* (army coat), and his head was covered with a *bezkozeerka* (a brimless cap) deeply drawn over his eyes. His right hand was in a sling. A wound in the left foot obliged him to limp and to walk with difficulty. A broad scar, extending from the right ear to the forehead, was visible on his face, which, while it did not disfigure him, changed the natural expression. Without this scar the resemblance between him and the man who had just left would have been very striking.

He stopped and looked around. Almost at his feet lay the fortune teller, weltering in blood, and from the closet came the screams of the young

woman, who, having heard the creak of the door, redoubled her cries for help.

"Save me! For God's sake, save me!"

The young man advanced to the closet door and asked:

"Who is there?"

"Whoever you may be," was the reply, "for the love of God, open the door!"

The young man did so. A beautiful young woman stepped out, whose pale features indicated fright and disgust.

"What has happened here?" she asked, upon seeing the fortune teller lying weltering in blood. "Who came here?" she lisped.

The young man asked her why she had been locked in the closet.

The young woman explained her presence there in a few words. While she was talking he raised Marfúsha, laid her on the bench, and washed the wound with cold water. Little by little she regained consciousness. She opened her eyes and looked around with a feeble glance. Finally she recovered completely. Her eyes sparkled, not with their wonted fire, however, but with the fire of the fever which had already seized her. Her glance rested first on the young woman, then wandered over to the young man, and she thus addressed him:

"I knew that I would die to-day, and thou hast come to hear the last word of vengeance from thy *bábushka* (grandmother)."

Turning then to the young woman, she said:

"Go now; my hour has come. I can do nothing for thee. I am powerless in good deeds. When I was convinced that Heaven was unwilling or powerless to save one whom I loved better than life, I turned to the powers of darkness and sought their aid for my revenge The hour to wreak it is near, but I shall not see it; fate forbids it. Go and leave us alone. Yet, wait. Open the second drawer of the cupboard in the corner yonder, where thou wilt find a box wrapped in a speckled rag. Bring it to me."

The young woman obeyed. The old crone opened the box with a trembling hand. It contained gold and silver coins and costly jewelry. Digging down, Marfúsha produced a massive gold ring, set with an opal, which she handed to the young woman.

"The opal is the symbol of tears. Wear this ring. But I conjure thee with thy life never to part with it, even if thou art obliged to ask alms. The ring is powerless to save thy husband, but it will avenge him. Go now, I have but a few minutes more to live."

When the young woman had gone she took out from the box a small bladder.

"Come closer, *vnúchek* (little grandson). My hour has come, and the gendarmes will soon be here; but they shall find me dying, and my last words will be a curse. Thou must flee before they arrive. Thou must not be taken, for there is a mighty work for thee to perform."

The words "grandmother" and "grandson" grated on the young man's ears, and he turned to her with:

"Listen, Marfúsha—"

The old woman seemed, however, to anticipate his thoughts, and broke in with:

"Grandson, I once had a husband; he perished on the gallows. I had a daughter; she died of a broken heart. The man who signed my husband's death warrant was also the cause of my daughter's untimely death. But destiny has preserved her son to avenge them. With the aid of a peasant woman I placed thee in an orphan asylum, where thou hast grown up. Thy mother died soon after, and with her disappeared every trace of the past. Although I have never made myself known to thee, my eye followed thee constantly. In this box thou wilt find the records wherein appears the name of the man who caused the death of thy grandfather, thy mother, and last, my own. Take it; it is thine inheritance. Thou surely dost know that a fugitive galley-slave and a deserter—"

"Grandmother! Marfúsha!" exclaimed the young man, astonished at her knowledge of the secret which he guarded so carefully.

"Calm thyself; thy secret is known only to me. I am not called the 'Witch of Kiev' without cause. Thou must not be found here. They may recognize thee, and all would be lost. Do not forget that it is ordained that thou shalt do a great work—the work of revenge. Thou must not perish. Save thyself! I do not demand an oath from thee that thou wilt avenge. Fate itself will show thee the way. Thou art the sword of justice, which thou wilt use without mercy. Begone; they are coming!"

"Grandmother, now that I found thee, I cannot, I must not, abandon thee—"

"No; wert thou to remain, it would serve no purpose, and thou wouldst perish thyself. I have only a few minutes more to live."

"No, grandmother, thy wound is not dangerous."

"I know that," replied the woman, with a bitter smile. "But the poison that this phial contained is deadly," pointing to the fragments of a phial.

"What? thou—"

"Yes; I have taken poison," continued the woman, "that I might be spared the tortures of the knout, and also that I might not be compelled to divulge thy secret. Kiss me good-by and go."

After a little reflection, she added:

"No, thou resemblest him too much; I do not want thy kiss. Get on thy knees and receive my blessing."

The youth knelt. Marfúsha laid her hands on his head, muttered something and said:

"Now, thou art blest for vengeance. But hasten; I hear their approach."

It was too late.

Exerting that last strength which is generated in the dying, she arose, jostled the young man into the closet, shoved the box into his hand, and bolted the door. That was the last effort of fading life. She endeavored to return to the bench, but her strength was not equal to it, and she fell senseless into the pool of blood near the stove.

Just then the chief of the gendarmes, accompanied by two subordinates, burst into the room. That was

Dupelt, the terror of all St. Petersburg. He approached the woman, who lay prostrate, and kicked her, shouting:

"Get up, witch, and follow me!"

Marfúsha opened her eyes.

"Ah, the hangmen have come already," she said in a rattling voice. "You have made haste, nevertheless you are too late."

"No foolish jests. Get up!" repeated the chief, again kicking her. "Raise the hag, since she refuses to get up," he added, turning to the gendarmes.

One of them seized her with his iron grip and placed her on her feet. She staggered, regarded the newcomers with her dim eyes, sighed deeply, and whispered faintly:

"Tell your master that the son will kill the father." With these words she fell, and the blood gushed out from her throat.

A gendarme stooped down, and after carefully examining her he announced:

"*Váshe prevoskhodítyelstvo,** she is dead."

"She is perhaps drunk. Convey the carcass to my headquarters."

The gendarmes obeyed, and Dupelt remained to search the place.

He hoped to find something of importance, anticipating with his usual cunning that there was a secret at the bottom of this affair. Why should the Tsar order him, the chief of the secret police, to personally place under arrest a mere old fortune teller, with

*Literally, "your eminence," but commonly used in addressing superiors in the sense of your excellency.

all possible precautions to observe secrecy? In vain did he rummage through the boxes and cupboard. He found nothing except old rags, packages of coffee grounds, and greasy cards. But Dupelt was not one to give up an undertaking at the first failure. He observed the door leading into the closet, and directed his attention to it. It was bolted. This aroused his suspicion. He unfastened it and entered the closet. He observed the dim figure of a man endeavoring to hide in a corner. In an instant Dupelt pounced upon him, and seized him with his powerful hands.

"Who is here?" he shouted in a menacing voice. In place of an answer he received a blow on the head that would have stunned an ox. The helmet softened the blow, but it was several minutes before he recovered his senses. On regaining consciousness he discovered that the man had escaped and bolted the closet door from without. Dupelt was obliged to call to his coachman through the little closet window to let him out.

Terribly incensed, he hastened to the Winter Palace to report to the Tsar the result of the arrest. He made no mention, however, of his adventure in the closet.

The inhabitants of Kolomna district were greatly surprised on the following day to find the house occupied by Marfúsha abandoned. Nothing was ever heard of her, and the neighbors believed that she had been carried off by the Devil during the night of the great storm.

CHAPTER V

A MEETING OF POLITICAL REFORMERS

Over the dirty spaces of the Viborg district are scattered squat and tumble-down structures. The isolated streets and alleys of this quarter furnished a rendezvous for the dregs of the populace of St. Petersburg. Gangs of thieves and cutthroats had established their headquarters here. Burglars and outlaws of every description, who follow their trade at night, found here a hiding place during the day. Escaped convicts from Siberia found security in this refuge until new crimes found them out, when they were flogged and sent back into exile.

The *kabaky* (drinking houses) were always crowded with suspicious-looking men and degraded women. In these saloons the customers pay for their *vodka,* not with money, but with handkerchiefs, watches, earrings, and other products of their industry. The police often swooped down on these places, but always without success; because, sharing with the rogues in their booty, they gave them timely warning of their intended invasion.

In one of the most remote and lonely streets of this district there arose a large one-story house, which had long been unoccupied. Its shutters were never seen to open, and the yard, which had not been trodden by human feet in many years, was covered with tall weeds. This building had once belonged to a rich usurer, who settled in this resort of thieves

and robbers for the convenience of trading in stolen goods. The usurer died intestate, and the distant relatives had been fighting each other in the courts for years to obtain title to the property.

Every night dark figures could be seen walking noiselessly, one by one, through the yard, endeavoring not to leave any traces behind them. Turning around the corner of the house, they would disappear as if they had been swallowed up by the earth. On this particular night the house was, as usual, immersed in complete darkness; only at times a dim light would appear on the spot where the spectral forms disappeared. One would almost believe that the ghost of the dead usurer was receiving his customers in the cellar, where he had kept his treasures.

The mysterious figures had, in fact, descended into the cellar, not, however, to deal with the dead man's ghost, but for an altogether different purpose. There were assembled here eighteen or twenty persons. They were dressed in *rubáshky* (peasants' jackets) and threadbare officers' uniforms. Any other attire would have attracted the attention and aroused the suspicion of the neigbhors.

The assemblage was made up of officers, writers, students, and of the youth who sought to transform the institutions of Russia. The fate of their predecessors, who had for their motto the words which Nicholas so heartily hated, "Liberty and a constitution," did not intimidate them.

A tall young man in a soldier's garb stood at the wicket. It was Marfúsha's grandson. He had already suffered for his liberal views. Having been

one of the best pupils of the Gátchina Orphan Home, he was drafted into the Guards. He was made a sergeant; then he became a member of the revolutionary society organized by Petrashévsky.*

This society of young idealists was stigmatized by the ignominious name of *"Karmolniky"* (rebels). Most of them had been exiles and had worked in the Nerchinsk mines of Siberia, among whom was Savelyév, under which name Marfúsha's grandson had been entered in the asylum. In the year 1853 the news of the war reached Siberia. Young Savelyév, who could hope for no pardon, and, impelled by youthful ardor, escaped from Siberia, reached the seat of war in the Caucasus, and became a soldier. He did not spare himself in the battles in which he took part. More than any one did he expose himself to dangers, for he hoped to earn his pardon at the price of his blood. At Bush-Kady-Klara he was the first to clamber upon the enemy's battery. His comrades of the Nízhnigorod Regiment followed him, and after a desperate encounter, the battery was taken. Savelyév was wounded in the left arm and right foot. Prior to the assault, during a skirmish, a Turkish sabre laid open his face. For his heroic conduct the military council had voted him one of the Geórgiev crosses, which had been sent by the Emperor to the regiment, but Savelyév refused to accept it, attributing everything

*Under his leadership a vast movement was started in Russia in 1848. An immense manuscript literature was secretly distributed in which the crimes of the government and the Emperor were exposed, and the people incited to strike for freedom. Petrashévsky was tried and exiled in 1849.

to the commandant of the regiment. A petition for his pardon, signed by Prince Bogration Mukharnsky himself, was immediately sent to St. Petersburg, but the reader is probably aware that forgiving and forgetting were unknown attributes of the relentless autocrat. Instead of the looked-for pardon followed an order to take him back to Siberia by *etap* (foot march). In recognition of his heroism in battle he was exempted from punishment with the knout, to which he was liable for desertion. This intelligence struck him like a knife in the heart. All his comrades and superiors were greatly distressed. They could not send to Siberia one who had fought side by side with them with such self-abandon. He was given to understand that he must flee.

Instead of going over to the enemy, he obtained a false passport which would take him to St. Petersburg and protect him when there. In his simplicity he clung to the hope that the Emperor would yet forgive him. On reaching the capital and learning the real character of Nicholas he abandoned all hope. He found in the city former companions who had also escaped from Siberia.

Savelyév was standing at the wicket observing the entering conspirators, and asking them for the password. "The slave is alert!" each one said on entering. "By day and by night!" replied Savelyév. After all had assembled, he closed the wicket, bolted it with a heavy piece of timber, and descended to join the group below.

In the center of the cellar stood an empty barrel. Upon it lay an ikon of the Smolensk Holy Mother,

in a silver plate, with two daggers in the form of the cross. Each conspirator, upon entering, made a low genuflexion before the ikon, touched it with his lips, and took his seat. The meeting place was rudely furnished. In place of chairs and stools there were empty barrels and boxes, with boards across them. An old bed, with a half-rotted mattress on it, possibly the very bed upon which the old usurer had died, served as a chair for the presiding officer.

In the chairman's place sat Mikhaíl Dostoyévsky, and on his right and left were Mikháylov and Miklashévsky, all three of whom subsequently paid with their lives for their devotion to liberty. When Savelyév entered, Dostoyévsky solemnly rose from his seat.

"The meeting is open; let us sing a song to remind us of the fate which awaits us." The whole assembly joined as in one voice in singing Nyekrássov's song of the Unfortunate Galley-Slaves:

"THE UNFORTUNATES."

"Lively, boys; there is work for the shovels,
We were not brought here to be idle;
Not without purpose did God fill with gold
The womb of Mother Earth.

"Labor while your strength holds out,
Do not shirk or idly neglect your work.
Our grandchildren will bless us for it
When Russia shall have become rich!

"Let the sweat run in streams
Like water from our arduous task,
And freeze on our branded bodies
While we rest from our labors.

"Let us suffer hunger and thirst,
Let us shiver from winter's blasts,
Each stone we turn over
Will be useful to Russia!"

At the conclusion of the singing, Mikháylov arose and, in a ringing voice, spoke as follows:

"My friends, we are the pioneer workers for the future happiness of Russia; we are the hope and bulwark of our unhappy, enslaved fatherland. We are not to be intimidated either by hardship or danger. Forward! forward! Should a yawning abyss confront us, we will, like Mucia Cevola, hurl ourselves into it without looking behind, that we may, by giving our lives, propitiate the gods. Our country is young, full of strength, and ready to sacrifice everything to secure freedom. Up to the present time all attempts to humiliate Russia have proven futile. The attacks which are directed against us now would have been broken by the iron will of our people if education had enlightened them.

"Let us, then, make it our purpose to labor untiringly, with pen and voice, to compel Russia to go parallel with the other civilized nations of Europe on the road to enlightenment.

"Let us so prepare the soil that there may germinate in its bosom the precious seed which we shall sow there. Let us enlighten the people that they may understand and feel the meaning of the word Liberty. Let us swear that we will all stand for this holy consummation. The great poet, whom we all revere, has well said that every stone shall serve for the glory and greatness of Russia. Let us all swear!"

"We swear," resounded from all sides under the heavy underground vaults. Dostoyévsky then rose and said:

"Brethren, let us vow once more never to resort to sword or dagger; for the sacred cause of liberty never flourishes on a soil stained with blood. Blood produces not freedom but tyranny! Promise, then, that ye will never incite the people to useless bloodshed."

"We promise!" again came from the auditors.

A young man now arose, whose gentle and noble features, as well as polished manners, formed a striking contrast to his rough attire. He said:

"Though I belong by birth to the ruling class, and own serfs, I have always contended for their liberation. My first act upon reaching maturity was to give freedom to mine. But who could have foreseen the consequences? My wishes found an insurmountable barrier. By imperial order my former serfs, to whom I had given land in the hope of making them free tillers of the soil, remained bondsmen against my will.

"One of the principal obstacles to the development of our people is indisputably the prevailing serfdom. Shall we go on forever to thrive and grow fat on the sweat of our fellow-creatures?"

If the attention of the assembly had not been wholly engrossed in the speaker's words, they would have heard stifled sobbing. After a short pause, the speaker resumed:

"While the peasantry is dragging out its pitiable existence in our wonderfully rich country, often suffering for the want of bread, our tables are loaded with the choicest delicacies from every quarter of

the globe. While the unfortunate serf is laboring under the cruel rays of the sun or in the biting cold of winter, we spend at the restaurants in a single day as much as would keep a peasant family in food a whole year.

"When shall we cease to be the lords of the family life of the *muzhik?* When will the wives and daughters of our serfs cease to be the victims of our fancies and our lusts?

"Slavery weakens Russia. Let us pledge ourselves, then, that we will endeavor by all means in our power to liberate our fellowmen. Let it be our most sacred object!"

"We vow!" came from the assembly.

When the echo of the last shout died away, Savelyév approached the speaker, and warmly pressing his hand, said:

"Prince Odoyévsky, you are a worthy son of your father, who has been languishing in Siberia for the last thirty years. He, too, sacrificed his life for freedom. I talked with him as I am now talking with you, and have pressed his noble hand as I am now pressing yours. Let us hope that the day is not far off when he can appear among us. The allied powers will not lay down their arms as long as the crown rests on the head of our tyrant monarch. His son, the hope of all Russia, will seek to heal the wounds inflicted by his father.

"You have just alluded to serfdom, which is gnawing at the heart of Russia like a vulture. Behold a living example of the lust of one of many of our landowners!"

With these words he led out from a corner of the meeting place a young man, dressed in peasant's garb, and introduced him to the assembly. He appeared to be not more than eighteen years old. His wasted and pale features inspired irresistible sympathy, though they indicated neither will-power nor strength of character, but rather helplessness and femininity. His hair was cut short after the fashion of peasants, but left the impression that it had once been long, and had ornamented his lovely face with soft curls. His wonderful blue eyes were red from crying, and the blue circles under them spoke eloquently of what he must have endured.

"Tell your story to the assembly," asked Savelyév.

"I cannot," replied the young man, sobbing. He sank on a box and, covering his face with his hands, continued to weep.

"Under the circumstances, I shall try to tell her history myself," said Savelyév, and continued as follows:

"The person before you is not a man, but a frail girl who walked two thousand versts to petition the Tsar for justice and protection.

"She sought in vain an opportunity to speak to him who is lavish with favors to the few, and fastens chains on the many. You already know of my flight from the Caucasus. It happened after I had shed my blood for my country. I was obliged to keep off the main thoroughfares for fear of being recognized, and walked along the banks of the Volga straight to the capital. I lived on charity—the Russian *muzhík* is hospitable and sympathetic.

"In this way I traversed many hundred versts through the Astrakhan and Saratov steppes, seldom meeting any one in the course of a whole day who could point out the road to me, and being guided by the sun. Thus I reached a village situated between Saratov and Volsk. During the last days I had become so faint from exhaustion and enfeebled by the half-healed wounds that I could proceed on my journey only with great difficulty. I wished to stop several days at Saratov to rest, but feared the police. I continued my journey as best I could until I fell unconscious before the house of a *pomyéshchik* (landlord). I do not know how long I lay there in this condition; I only remember that a sudden burning pain brought me to consciousness. Before me stood a short man with a fat paunch, on whose face was the expression of beastly sensuality, and who shook me painfully by the sore arm.

" 'What art thou doing here, vagrant?' roughly asked the fat man.

"The word 'vagrant' restored all my energy.

" 'Since when is a man who risked his life for his Tsar and country called a vagrant?'

"There was a murmur of disapproval in the crowd of *muzhíks* who had gathered around.

" 'Silence, dogs!' shouted the landlord, threatening them with his *nagáyka* (a whip charged with lead). The peasants seemingly feared him, for they immediately became silent.

" 'Where dost thou come from?' he continued.

"I remained silent.

" 'I will make thee speak!' he snarled, flourishing his whip.

"The tension was becoming strained. The circle of peasants crowded together more compactly, and threatening murmurs began to be heard.

" 'But why waste words? Take this beast and drag him out of the village.'

"Not one of the *muzhiks* stirred.

" 'Have you not heard me?' he shouted, turning toward the crowd in a violent and threatening manner.

" 'Dost refuse to obey me, Kovalyév?' he yelled, turning to a gray-haired old man.

" '*Báryn* (master), is he not a soldier who fought for the Tsar?' replied the old man sadly. The speaker was the *stárosta* (village bailiff).

" 'Ah, thou darest to argue with me,' cried the landlord in a furious mood, and laid his whip across the peasant's face with such force that the blood gushed from it. The murmur of the people was about to break out in rebellion, when the bells of an approaching vehicle were heard in the distance.

" 'The *stanovóy* (district inspector) is coming!' some one exclaimed.

" 'The *stanovóy*' repeated the landlord, and retreated several steps. Although he was on the best terms with the police, he had, as I learned later, many reasons for not being overjoyed at the visit of the *stanovóy*.

"The *troyka* (vehicle drawn by three horses) halted at the landing of the landlord's house. A

man in advanced age, with a gray moustache, alighted from the vehicle and approached me.

"He was a veteran of the campaign of 1812. Although the infection of corruption in official life had left him tainted with the disease, yet his heart had not ceased to beat with a throb of comradeship at the sight of a soldier.

" 'What is the matter here?' he asked on perceiving the commotion.

" 'A wounded soldier from the Caucasus,' came from the assembled crowd.

" 'Is that true?' asked the *stanovóy,* stopping before me, and added, 'So, thou hast also battled against the accursed enemy? In Asia or in the Crimea?'

" 'In Asia,' I answered with difficulty; thirst and fever were suffocating me.

" 'Who of you, brothers, would give me a drink of water? I am dying of thirst,' I said, addressing the peasants, profiting by the confusion. A young girl immediately left the crowd and ran quickly after the drink.

" 'Well, comrade, thou hast seen fire, then?' continued the *stanovóy* kindly. 'We have also seen it. Hast thou heard about the battle of Borodino?' At these words he unbuttoned his military greatcoat and displayed his Geórgiev cross and medal on his breast, earned by him in that awful slaughter.

" 'Scoundrels!' he thundered at the *muzhíks,* who were entirely blameless; 'how dare you abandon a servant of the Tsar and leave him in the street? Here, take this,' he said, turning to me and handing

me a 5-ruble note. 'Dogs!' he continued, berating the peasants, 'if you fail to make him comfortable, and if I find him still here when I am ready to leave, I shall flay you from head to foot.'

" 'Come, let us go, *Gospodín** Makárov!' he said to the landowner. 'I come once more to see you about an ugly affair. When, the devil take it, will you cease to perpetrate your dirty tricks? It strikes me that it is time you ceased your pranks.'

"It was no strain on the *stanovóy* to give the poor wounded soldier five rubles, since his visit to Makárov was worth several hundred rubles to him in hush money. The police is well paid in matters of that kind.

"As soon as the landlord withdrew, the tongues of the peasants loosened up. Each of them sought to serve me; each invited me to his hut. Just then the blonde girl returned and handed me a pitcher of milk.

" 'Drink it, *slúzhba* (soldier)!' she said; 'milk is better than water.'

"While I was slowly drinking the delicious draught my eyes involuntarily met the eyes of the girl, wherein was the expression of deep sorrow.

" 'Thank you, *golúbka* (little dove), thank you!' was all I could utter, for I sank again into unconsciousness. On recovering I found myself in the house of an old peasant who had served in the campaign of 1812, judging from the black cross which was suspended on his breast. Opposite me sat the blonde girl who had given me the milk; but as soon

*An equivalent to Mr. in English, used in addressing civilians.

as I opened my eyes she withdrew. Thanks to their care I soon regained my strength. Although the landlord knew of my presence on his estate, he did not molest me, owing to the gracious conduct of the officer in my behalf.

"On the fifth day after my arrival in the village I noticed the absence of the girl whom I had become accustomed to see near me constantly. I inquired of the peasant the reason of this, who, in place of an answer, only shook his head. On the seventh day I took leave of my host, and offered to pay him for his trouble; but not only did he refuse to accept it, but even gave me bread, meat, and a bottle of *vodka* to take on my journey. I left, thanking him heartily. and requested him to thank the young girl for me.

"Within a verst of the village there is a deep valley overlooked by a dense forest. I sat down on a hill to take a last look at the place. While I sat there, buried in thought, I felt the touch of a hand. Looking around I beheld the girl to whom my thoughts involuntarily wandered. She burst into a flood of tears.

" 'Soldier, I ought to tell thee that they forbade me to tend to thee or to visit thee. But I was obliged to see thee before leaving for Petersburg, for my fate and my life depend on thee.'

"I looked at her in amazement, but she failed to notice it and continued:

" 'We may be observed here. Let us go farther. I know a place nearby where we can talk undisturbed.'

"My surprise will be understood. I got up and followed her. She led me through the forest, avoiding the pathways. We soon found ourselves in a small bare place, resembling a kiosk.

" 'Here,' she said, 'we can talk unmolested. Be seated, thou hast a long distance before thee; I will stand up.'

"I seated myself, and asked her to be seated beside me, but she refused, saying:

" 'No, I shall remain standing; it is better so.' Reflecting a moment, she said: 'While in Petersburg thou wilt see the Tsar and talk with him. I was told that soldiers often have an opportunity to speak to him. Thou must tell him about me; he will believe thee, for hast thou not shed thy blood for him?'

"I myself naïvely imagined at that time that all unfortunates could approach the Tsar. So I answered artlessly:

" 'What is wrong with thee, *golúbka* (little dove)? I stand ready to do everything in my power for thee. Yes, I shall talk to the Emperor.'

" 'Well, thou must tell him about poor Natásha. For her there is nothing on earth, outside thyself. As soon as thou camest to our village I felt that thou wert sent by God to save me. I often told my troubles to the *stárosta* (bailiff), but he is the same kind of a man as Makárov, and they assist each other—a crow does not peck out the eyes of another crow.'

" 'But tell me, child, what happened to thee?'

" 'Well, soldier, though I am in the garb of a peasant, I neither belong to them by birth nor asso-

ciation. My mother was a French woman, and governess to Makárov's sister. His father compelled my mother to marry him. What could the young girl do, ignorant as she was even of the native language? By many threats he obliged her to yield to his suit, and from that time her heart was broken. She died in giving birth to me. At first I was reared as a daughter; old Makárov worshipped me. Once, as a result of many oppressions, the *muzhíks* rebelled. The *starshína* (village elder) whom my father, in a moment of passion, had flogged, set the house on fire, and when he appeared with a whip in his hand, striking with it right and left, the *muzhíks* seized him and threw him into the blaze. The unfortunate rushed to the blazing window, begging for mercy, but the peasants pushed him back into the furnace with their pitchforks.*

" 'After his death there appeared his son, a former Hussar, who had been disgracefully dismissed from his regiment. By his father's will he inherited the land, while to me was bequeathed a considerable amount of money. It was easy for the son, who had engaged in counterfeiting, to change the will in his own favor.†

" 'In the following census I was registered as a bondswoman. I was then only nine years old. I was driven out from the master's quarters and placed among the servants, and with the order that I should perform the hardest labor. But as I grew up my master became kinder towards me; his passion was

*This is a true incident of the serfdom period.
†Taken from the archives of criminal cases.

aroused, and when I was barely fifteen years old he began to persecute me with his love.'

" 'How, his own natural sister!' I exclaimed in surprise.

" 'Do not be surprised, soldier. A few days ago he flogged to death a daughter of his father, the wife of a soldier, whose husband is now fighting near Sebastopol, because she refused to yield to him. You see, the nobles do not acknowledge in us their relatives, and the law does not give us any rights. The woman he flogged to death was born in bondage; but I, who was born free, never thought that I could be treated in like manner. For two years I enjoyed peace from the persecution of my master, who was drafted into the army, and he dared not refuse to go. A few months later he succeeded under some pretense in avoiding the service, for he is as cowardly as he is cruel. From that time on he has been persecuting me worse than ever. I dare not go anywhere or speak to any one, for he follows every movement I make. During the first few days of thy stay in the village I could tend to thee because my master was in the city, where he went to arrange with the police for the murder of the soldier's wife. But since his return he punishes me severely. Yesterday he beat me cruelly.' At these words she showed me the blue welts on her body and arms. 'He beat me because I refused him. One day he will kill me with the same knout with which he killed the soldier's wife. Wilt thou not tell the Tsar all about this, that he may forbid him to kill me?'

" 'Poor child,' I replied, 'what art thou thinking about? It will be many a month before I reach the capital; and before I may have an opportunity to speak to the Emperor a still greater time will be consumed. And in the meantime—'

"She looked at me in despair, and bursting in tears, she exclaimed:

" 'Then my last hopes are blown away like dust. Poor, unfortunate one that I am, nothing remains for me but to die. The lake before the master's house is deep; I will not be the first to find death there.'

"Her hopeless condition wrung my heart, and I asked her:

" 'Natásha, is there no one in your village who loves thee and whom thou couldst love in return?' She looked at me in bewilderment.

" 'I have told thee everything,' she replied.

" 'Very well, then, there remains nothing but to flee.'

" 'But how am I to flee? And to what place?' she retorted. 'I have never been anywhere beyond this village.'

" 'We must go to St. Petersburg, Natásha, and tell thy story to the Tsar.'

" 'To the Tsar? I? And how am I to do it? I do not even know the way to the Tsar's city. Thou hast told me thyself that the distance is very great.'

"It was not an easy matter to persuade her. Finally she decided to venture on the journey. It

is useless to tell here of the many hardships we had to endure on the way.

"First of all I had to cut off her hair and to dress her like a peasant lad, as her loveliness attracted universal attention. It is now two months since we arrived, but neither I nor she have succeeded in getting an interview with the Emperor. To-day Natásha has come to this assembly to ask assistance. In the little room which she now occupies she is in constant danger of being discovered. Comrades, I decided to bring her here, and ask your aid, as I am powerless to shield her alone. I myself am threatened with the knout as an escaped convict and a deserter."

While Savelyév was appealing to the comrades, Natásha burst in tears, covering her face with her hands. In the last words of Savelyév she discovered a new grief, and started up from her place as if stung. He remarked her movement and turned to her with a bitter smile:

"Yes, Natásha, my pure, innocent friend, I am an escaped convict. Forgive me for keeping it a secret from thee. I did not wish to cause thee new and useless tears. But calm thyself; thou seest in this assembly the noblest sons of our fatherland; they are not ashamed of the fugitive convict-deserter."

Dostoyévsky, the president of the assembly, rose from his seat, approached the soldier, and warmly pressed his hand: "No, Savelyév, no; perhaps the same fate awaits us all! Thou hast suffered for thy country, and it owes thee thanks. I have a family—a wife and two children—and thy friend can find a

home with us until her condition has improved and mine has not become worse." These last words he said in a low and nervous tone.

Natásha threw on him a look full of gratitude, and was about to rise to thank him, when Count Odoyévsky stopped her.

"Natásha," he broke in, "I, too, could offer you shelter at my house, but I am alone, and I know from what my friend Savelyév has said that you would refuse to accept the hospitality of a bachelor. From the time I heard of your distress I reflected in what way I could be useful to you and protect you from your persecutors. You need a written certificate showing you to be a free woman. I will register you as my bondswoman whom I gave freedom. This is possible in Holy Russia. God will forgive me this, because I am righting a wrong."

Savelyév, still holding Dostoyévsky's hand, drew him to Odoyévsky, and in an outburst of gratitude threw his arms around both of them in a warm embrace.

The cawing of a crow rang out suddenly three successive times near the door.

"Quick, blow out the candles!" screamed Mikháylov. In an instant all the lights were extinguished. Footsteps were already heard on the sidewalk, and some one knocked on the wicket.

"Well done, brave fellow!" remarked Yurkévich in a whisper to a youth, almost a boy, who had been guarding the entrance. The conspirators tumbled the boxes and barrels helter-skelter, and left the underground chamber by another exit.

CHAPTER VI

A POLICE PLATOON CAPTURED BY THE ENGLISH

The soldier-policemen knocked a long time on the wicket for admission. Finally, one of them climbed over the fence and opened it. The reader will probably wonder why they acted as if they wished to give warning of their coming. There is nothing surprising in this, for that was really their object. Count Orlov, the chief of gendarmes, had issued an order to the *pristav* (police inspector) of the Viborg district to arrest all suspicious persons who assembled in the so-called "Haunted House." The *pristav,* thinking that the object was to apprehend his customary clients, the "honest" rogues and thieves, who paid him a regular stipend, found it best to notify them of his approach. By so doing he executed the order of his chief, and at the same time saved his income. In view of these considerations he went personally with his soldiers, thoughtfully forgetting to surround the house. After wasting no little time in knocking, he decided to enter the court, but only after being satisfied that the suspected men had escaped.

The conspirators had in the meantime ascended into the house by the stairway, and easily reached the street through the windows. While they were jumping out, one by one, the soldiers were carefully

picking their way through the inner court by the light of their lanterns. Suddenly they heard the cawing of crows in the cellar, which call was repeated in the street. The soldiers were frightened and halted.

"Forward! boys; forward! they are there," called the *pristav,* "they are there; we will catch them!"

"But where are they?" asked the soldiers.

"Where? Forward, you imbeciles!"

The platoon moved carefully. Then hoots of an owl came from different directions. "God protect and preserve us!" murmured the superstitious soldiers.

"No one seems to be here," timidly said one of them. "We see no one," chimed in the rest.

"I fail to see any one," joined the *pristav.* "If anybody were here, I would certainly know it. Oh, these blue uniforms, they meddle in everything, and the devil alone knows what reports they are making only to interfere with us. And yet, we must catch some one, otherwise I will catch it myself—ah, I have it," said the *pristav* gleefully, as if struck by a sudden idea; "if we find no one here, I will bring some one out of jail and say that we arrested him here."

The hoot of the owl was heard again.

"*Váshe Visokoblagoródie* (your highness), had we not better retreat? We are not going to find anything."

The lugubrious note of the owl produced a disagreeable impression even on the iron nerves of the *pristav.* After a moment's silence he said:

"No, *rebyata* (children), that will not do; we must carry out our orders. Let us enter the house. Where is the entrance?"

"Here," answered a strange voice. The cry of the owl was heard for the third time from different directions. The soldiers hastened to hide themselves in the house. They passed through bare rooms. The sharp cold wind whistled through the open windows, causing the soldiers to shiver.

If they had remained in the court a while longer they would have heard the splash of oars on the Neva, and would have seen suspicious-looking figures moving in the darkness. But the *pristav* with the soldiers was in the house on the ladder leading into the cellar. He opened the door, from whence issued a damp and mouldy odor.

"There cannot be any one here," said the soldiers, fearing to enter the cellar.

"I think so, myself," assented the *pristav,* who was himself impatient to leave.

The soldiers had noticed in the court an entrance leading into another cellar which served at times, as they well knew, as a warehouse for spirituous liquors brought from abroad by smugglers from Finland.

A bright idea possessed simultaneously both the chief and his detachment.

The secret society whose members they were to apprehend was nothing else, according to their calculations, than a band of ordinary smugglers. Now that all the ports were blockaded and all imports were prohibited their business must be particularly good. "Perhaps they have hidden there a few

barrels of rum or *vodka,*" thought the soldiers. (For the common people, the anticipation of getting a good drink of *vodka* drives away even fear.)

"Search the cellar, children!" ordered the chief.

"We are glad to do our best, your highness," answered the men, and, together with their chief, they descended into the cellar.

"All hands, ready!" came in a muffled voice from a corner in the court.

"All right!" answered other voices.

At these words a dozen powerful Englishmen leaped into the cellar.

The soldiers were not wrong in their calculations. The Finnish smugglers, taking advantage of the confusion of the times, were hiding spirits in this underground resort.

"Come here!" cheerfully called one of the soldiers.

"What is the matter there?" asked the *pristav.*

"Rum in bottles and in barrels, your highness," reported the soldier.

"Indeed? Let us try it. Uncork a bottle, quickly!"

"Perhaps it is poisoned; they say—"

"Go on, don't talk nonsense; whoever heard of poisoned *vodka?* Give it here quick," urged the others.

And the bottle passed from hand to hand.

"At any rate, we didn't come here for nothing," remarked the chief, smacking his lips and rubbing his hands. "Ugrúmov, go at once to the station-house and bring a wagon. We must carry off our find, else the smugglers will take it from us. But

not a word to any one; it would be a bad thing for us if the whole town should talk of our discovered treasure."

"At your service, your highness," replied the soldier, smiling, and proceeded to the exit, lighting his way with his lantern. Scarcely had he uttered these words when his eyes fell on a gang of men, armed to the teeth.

"Your highness, the smugglers!" he screamed, and was immediately felled by a powerful blow of the fist from one of the smugglers. The soldiers heard his alarm; they saw his lantern go out, and observed the sudden disappearance of Ugrúmov. They were seized with terror; they were not only afraid to move, but even to look in the direction where their companion had disappeared.

Before they could recover they were surrounded by strange men with ready revolvers in their hands.

"Bind and gag them!" ordered a voice, which was probably that of the chief.

In an instant the *pristav* and his entire command were bound, gagged, and placed in a boat, which glided away like a shadow on the Neva.

(The smugglers had made known the hiding place of their booty to an English reconnoitering party; and now the English returned to their admiral with Russian prisoners.)

The day following, the whole city of St. Petersburg talked of the mysterious disappearance of a division of police soldiers. Every one had a theory to account for this singular occurrence, but it was soon explained in a simple manner.

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPEROR'S FAVORITE MISTRESS

On the Fontanka, in a splendid palace not far from the Obukhóvsky Bridge, there lived at the time of our story the all-powerful Minister of State, Count Kleinmichel. The people hated but feared him. Who would recognize in the proconsul the son of a lackey from Finland, whom Arakchéyev* once dragged out of the mire to make him a blind weapon?

Like most time-servers, he owed his high station not to ability, but to his servile devotion and blind obedience; the word of the Emperor was more to him than justice, morality, or even honor. The proud Nicholas, who looked upon men as mere marionettes whose strings were in his hands, preferred such people. He strangled all liberal views and individuality among his ministers and servants, even when such views tended toward the welfare of Russia and were harmless to himself. For this reason he kept at a distance such men as Yermólov and Muravyév-Karsky, and took up the Klein-

*Arakchéyev, the "rough corporal of Gátchina," the instrument of Paul's tyranny, gained the confidence of Alexander I., and surrounded himself with men best fitted to head a reaction against the liberal tendencies of the Emperor.

michels, Chernishevs, Volkónskys, Gedeónovs, and such like creatures.

By ascending the principal stairway of the Kleinmichel mansion and turning to the right, one reached the apartment of the Tsar's famous favorite, Mademoiselle Nelídova, Kleinmichel's kinswoman, whom he personally introduced to the Tsar, to please his master and forward his own ends. There was a long row of parlors, one of which was the favorite's boudoir.

This room was furnished *de luxe* and in oriental style. The walls were hung with red and white moire, forming a bright rosette on the ceiling, from which was suspended a massive bronze chandelier finished in Bohemian crystals; from the windows, hung with heavy red curtains, fell a pink reflection over all the room. The gilded divans and settees were upholstered with red material, and the tables and chairs of nalisander wood were ornamented with French bronze. On the chimney-piece and the glass cupboard were a hundred rare objects which usually adorn the boudoirs of modern ladies. There were Chinese figures sent by the ambassador from Pekin; Japanese curios, obtained by Admiral Putyátin; porcelain from Berlin, Saxony, and Sèvres; huge pearls of irregular shape, arranged in the form of human figures, animals, etc.

The finest ornament of the chamber was indisputably the hostess herself—Mademoiselle Nelídova—who sat in a kiosk under a group of rare tropical orchids. Despite the three children which she had borne to the Emperor, her face preserved the full

bloom of youth. Her regular features equalled those of the loveliest women of Russia. Her beauty lacked the charm of Mme. Montespan, but rather reminded one of the irresistible type of beauty of Mme. Maintenon, who knew how to captivate and hold the heart of Louis XIV. Mademoiselle Nelídova had won the heart of Nicholas not only by her beauty, but also by her intelligence. She could manage her sovereign with a tact which some women understand. Appearing to be submissive in everything, she always led the Tsar in the way which in her opinion was the best. Another woman similarly gifted might have used her influence for her own benefit. Mademoiselle Nelídova did not. Her influence was often productive of beneficent results; and, knowing the proud and suspicious character of the Emperor, she never attempted to show her power in accomplishing her purpose. She appreciated his love for his family and his regard for the invalid Empress. She felt that her power lay in her private life. Her name was seldom mentioned in social circles, and many old citizens of St. Petersburg never so much as suspected her existence, although it would have been difficult to determine whether this silence proceeded from actual ignorance or from fear of the all-powerful secret police. In the provinces, where the system of espionage was not so well established, she was often remembered by some uncomplimentary allusions, while the name of Kleinmichel was always pronounced with aversion and dread.

On this particular day Mademoiselle Nelídova was absent-minded. Her eyes ran over the pages of the

latest novel by Alexander Dumas; she read mechanically as it were, without understanding what she was reading. For some time past the Emperor had visited her at intervals, and then apparently without interest. Often he sat there whole hours in silence, answering her questions in monosyllables. Had her star declined? Had another taken her place in the Tsar's heart? Did a crisis threaten her pride and love? Formerly he used to come to her regularly, frankly sharing with her in everything which was on his mind, at times seeking her advice and often her consolation. And now the Emperor answered her questions so unwillingly. Was it possible that he loved her no longer?

These thoughts agitated her mind; her eyes glistened; her face glowed with a feverish heat. Even a proud beauty feels at times the need of a warm heart, of a loving caress.

The footman announced the arrival of the Emperor. She had no time to prepare for his reception. Nicholas entered. As was his custom, he walked up to her ceremoniously, gallantly kissed her hand, and observed that it was dry and hot and that on her face glowed a feverish brightness.

"You are ill," he said in a caressing voice. "The physician should be sent for."

Her heart contracted and bitter tears streamed down her cheeks.

"What is the matter?" asked the Emperor, knitting his brow.

She sought to hide her tears, knowing how extremely they displeased the Tsar.

"What is your distress?" again asked the Tsar.

"Nothing, Your Majesty," she replied. "I am not quite well; you have surely noticed that. See how my head burns." With these words she laid the Emperor's hand to her forehead. Nicholas regarded her with a perplexed air.

"Your head is feverish, but it is not caused by illness; there is something on your heart. Tell me what it is. I wish to know it."

"Your Majesty, I have had an ugly dream."

"Dreams are nothing more than echoes of our imagination."

"A terrible dream, Your Majesty. I dreamt that you loved me no longer!"

It is impossible to describe the expression with which she uttered these words. There was in it injured pride, endless love, and complete despair.

"I have already said that dreams are simply impressions from our waking mind."

"But if my dream should become a reality, I shall not survive it, Your Majesty, I shall not outlive it," said Mademoiselle Nelídova despairingly.

"Mina, what has happened to you? I do not understand."

Mademoiselle Nelídova burst in a flood of tears; but, accustomed to restrain her feelings, she mastered herself and whispered in an apparently calm tone: "Forgive me, Your Majesty, I forgot that you dislike tears."

In spite of his hard heart, Nicholas, staggering under the burden of events in the Crimea and in

the East, felt keenly the sting of her taunt, and was obliged to murmur as kindly as he could:

"Cry, Mina; it is said that tears assuage grief." Simultaneously with this remark, he rang the bell and ordered the footman to tell Count Kleinmichel to report.

"You will excuse me," he turned to Mademoiselle Nelídova—"business matters."

She quickly wiped away her tears to conceal her distress from her kinsman, whom she despised in common with all Russians. In a few minutes the Count entered. He saluted the Emperor in military fashion, which the latter acknowledged with a nod.

"Hast thou executed my order?" asked the Tsar.

"Your Majesty's obedient servant always carries out the behest of his gracious monarch. Here are the papers." He laid a green portfolio upon the table.

"To what expense were they charged?"

"Agreeably to Your Majesty's order, they were charged to the disbursements on account of the construction of the Moscow-Petersburg Railroad."

"Very good; leave us now and await my orders in the reception room. I wish to talk with thee in relation to to-day's session of the imperial council. I shall soon order thee summoned."

Count Kleinmichel, the slave of his monarch and the satrap of his subordinates, bowed low and left the room. The Emperor opened the portfolio, looked over the valuable papers contained in it, and then turned to Mademoiselle Nelídova:

"I am still your debtor. Here are thirty millions in French and English securities; for God alone knows what may happen to Russian finances. Five millions are for you, five for the girl, and ten for each of the two boys. I would gladly add a title, but this I cannot do on account of the Empress and my lawful children."

In presenting her with a sum sufficient to secure her and her children in becoming conditions, Nicholas showed his generous domestic character, but the money was taken from the imperial treasury.

The late Emperor Alexander II. exceeded his father in affection for his offsprings. Nicholas gave them only money, sordid money, while permitting them to remain illegitimates. Alexander, on the other hand, not only rewarded his favorites with substantial means, but secured for them a safe and firm social position by opportunely marrying them to men who aspired to make their way in the world. As an illustrious example of this may be cited the two princesses Dolgorúky, who had been the Emperor's favorites, one after the other. The older one was married to Albedínsky, after being four months with child. He was the Russian military attaché at Paris, where he had greatly compromised himself by his reckless extravagance and his indiscreet attentions to the Empress Eugénie, as well as by the shady methods whereby he obtained French military plans for transmission to Prussia. He was in danger of being sent to Clichy. To save himself from the threatening danger, he readily consented to wed the princess. The second Princess Dolgorúky

was still better settled. The affectionate monarch gave her first a large sum of money, and on the children he bestowed a title and even the command of several regiments. But the kind father found that the amount he had given them out of his private fortune was insufficient. He unhesitatingly made a third interior loan, the whole amount of which found its way into the coffers of the fortunate princess; that is to say, he sacrificed the interests of Russia for the sake of his favorite mistress and her children by himself. He crowned his good work by marrying her off and bestowing the title of the illustrious Yuryévsky family upon her offsprings.

But what say his faithful subjects about these doings? The intelligent public smiled and laughed in their sleeves, and quietly purchased shares in the third interior loan, while the ignorant mass sighed and continued to bear upon its bent back all the burden of taxes and loans, and kept silent, which was interpreted to mean that everybody was satisfied.

Let us return to our story.

"Then it is true!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Nelídova, pushing the valuable papers aside with a trembling hand.

The Emperor again knitted his brow, and asked: "What do you mean by that remark?"

"What I mean?" repeated Mademoiselle Nelídova, bursting in tears; "I feel that Your Majesty loves me no longer; that another has taken my place in your heart. You wish to get rid of me with money. Have I loved you for the sake of money? Your Majesty knows that I am a descendant of an old

house, and am not a prostitute. Take back your money; I do not need it! I have not loved you for it? In you I have found the ideal man. I repeat, I love you not for money or for titles, but for yourself!"

Without realizing it, the favorite touched the most sensitive cord of the proud Emperor—his honor. He approached her and took her hand in his.

"I know all that, and never for a moment did I doubt your love. But, none the less, it is necessary to secure your future and the fate of our children. We are living in alarming times; and, as an Emperor, I am obliged to face dangers, and who knows when the enemy's bomb may land in our midst. Perhaps a bullet hurled by the nimble hand of some traitor—poison—"

"Your Majesty, for the love of God, do not talk of death! If you should die, which God forbid, I shall not survive it."

"Weak-minded people ever reason in this fashion. Death does not smite those who go to meet it; on the contrary, it mows down remorselessly those who cling to life. If death would strike those who covet it, I would not now be found among the living."

"Your Majesty, you frighten me."

"Enough useless words!" he retorted, with his customary harshness. "It is my duty to safeguard the future of the children with whom you made me happy. I only discharged my duty, and whatever fate may have in store for me, I have no reason to fear now."

He rang the bell and ordered the servant to bring a candle and sealing wax, and to summon the officer in waiting. The Emperor sealed the portfolio, wrote a few words on it, and handing it to the officer, he said:

"Take this to the Stiglitz Bank and deposit it in the name of Mademoiselle Nelídova. Tell Count Kleinmichel to appear for orders."

"You will excuse me," said Nicholas, turning to his favorite with cold courtesy. His tone caused her heart to palpitate. She turned pale and nervously pressed her hand to her heart as if trying to check its rapid pulsations.

The Emperor failed to notice her distress. In his stony heart there was neither sympathy nor regard for his fellowman. He was a man only in his family circle, and there only at brief intervals. He did not think that he was abusing his favorite with his last words. Threatening clouds were gathering on his high forehead; he sank his head on his breast, and silently paced up and down the room. Now and then he would pass his right hand across his forehead, as if wishing to scatter the thoughts which agitated him. But in vain; he cannot compel his conscience to be silent.

Kleinmichel had already come in, and was glancing round uneasily. The Tsar did not observe his presence. The Count coughed nervously several times, but was not heeded. Finally he approached the lady to learn what he was called for. Seeing the deathly pallor on her face and the agitation of the Emperor, he concluded that he was summoned

to act as mediator, as he had done before, to settle some disagreement between them. He met the Tsar while approaching the favorite. As if suddenly aroused from a deep sleep, Nicholas quickly raised his head and turned to the Count with a sharp, "What do you want?"

"Your Majesty pleased to summon me."

Regaining his senses, the Emperor said:

"Certainly; go to the Tsarévich and apologize to him. Thou hast offended him again to-day; that must never be repeated."

"Sire, only my devotion and zeal to Your Majesty—"

"I know that thou art faithful to me," interrupted the Emperor, "that is why I have rewarded thee—"

"More than I deserve," answered the Count, with a strange expression.

"Alexander is my son and successor, which thou hast apparently forgotten. I understand that thou art not of the number who flatter the Tsarévich and turn away from him to whom they owe their position in life. But for thine own sake thou shouldst not excite the Tsarévich against thyself, lest it might happen after I am dead that he should hurl thee back into the mire whence thou camest."

"Sire, you will live long for the glory of Russia!"

"Death is often much nearer than we suppose," remarked Nicholas in a tone so gloomy that both favorites shuddered involuntarily. Go at once to Anichkov Palace, and ask forgiveness from the Tsarévich. Yesterday, at the imperial council, I observed how he turned pale from anger, and that

he could scarcely restrain from tears over thy affront. Thou must do what I tell thee; I demand it!" he added in a voice which admitted no reply.

He then approached Mademoiselle Nelídova and kissed her hand.

"*Do svidániya* (good-by), Mina," he said. "I have not been very amiable to-day, but you will forgive me; I am sorely perplexed. I leave you with peace in my heart since I have provided for your future. Do not doubt my love; whatever may happen, believe in me."

He kissed her on the forehead, while she covered his hand with a flood of tears.

The Tsar left the room without looking around. Passing by the Count he turned to him and said: "Go at once to the Tsarévich!"

The all-powerful minister bowed in silence and followed the Tsar, gritting his wolfish teeth in helpless fury.

CHAPTER VIII

A GANG OF ST. PETERSBURG ROGUES

Walking along Sadováya (Garden) street to the Syénnaya Plóschad (Hay Square), and turning on the Obukhóvsky Prospect, you pass a massive square stone house on the left. This house is known to this day to the inhabitants of St. Petersburg under the name of "Vyazemsky's Place." Every one who goes by it at a late hour of the night experiences an involuntary shudder. The place might justly be called "the den of crime."

On the lower floor, facing Obukhóvsky Prospect, there was a *traktir* (eating and drinking place). In the main room, leading to the street, young lads were always busy waiting on the guests. Another room led to the court. Drinking and debauchery was kept up there from morning until night, and often to the following morning. In the room was to be seen every species of spendthrifts. The place was also frequented by a few retired officers, who lured young business men there and filled them with champagne mixed with a kind of thorn apple, and mercilessly picked them clean in "faro," "polka," "landsknecht," or in "naprávo-nalyévo." On the basement floor were meat and grocery stores, and a saloon for customers of the lower order. There one could meet

soldiers, *muzíks,* and night women of the lowest type; but the ever-present visitors of this place were every description of petty thieves.

On the corner was a wine-cellar, where the skilful proprietor, like a magician, understood how to draw from one and the same cask every conceivable kind of wine, selling it under the high-sounding names of Kherson, Madeira, Château-Lafitte, etc. In one of the many divisions of this cellar, the door of which was piled up with a row of barrels, congregated the most notorious bands of thieves of St. Petersburg, drinking *poperéchnik* (a mixed drink of wine and rum), and hatching plots and plans for their nefarious business. In the remaining portion of the house lived gamblers, public women, and every description of rabble. Along with this assembly of "night workers" there lived also the police inspector. In former times the police lived openly on terms of great friendship with the rogues.

The night was damp and cold; not a star was to be seen in the sky; the dim light of lanterns alone twinkled through thick darkness here and there on the abandoned square. In daytime the Syénnaya Plóschad swarms with people, while at night not a soul is to be seen. In the midst of the general darkness and quiet two men appeared on the square, coming from the direction of Bank street, holding an animated conversation:

"Thou art quite sure that she is here?" asked one.

"The devil take thee; I have not turned blind. How was I not to know my charming cousin?"

"How many times have I asked thee, Továrov,

not to call her by that name? Why, Natásha is decidedly not my sister, but simply a bondswoman, whom I shall punish in a peculiar manner for running away."

"But what is the matter with thee, Makárov? Thou canst not blame the girl for becoming tired of thy behavior and whip. It is to be presumed that the biblical phrase, 'whom he loveth, he chastiseth,' is not to her taste. It is evident that Natásha did not care to penetrate into the depth of this maxim. She is a simple *muzhíchka.*"

"Drop your moralizing! I must find her at any cost, even if it comes to fifty thousand rubles."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, that is not bad; it is easy to speak of fifty thousand rubles when one makes it himself. Such an amount, or one hundred thousand rubles, is of little consequence to thee; a half-hour's work on the press; and, as a reward, such a beautiful girl as Natásha."

"To the devil with thee! Thou art surely drunk. Dost not understand that we may be overheard? If thou canst not keep thy tongue behind thy teeth, I will tear it out for thee," furiously retorted Makárov.

"Yes, it is true that I drank. Did I not have to entertain that simpleton Khvalínsky, the merchant's son, after he had just obtained from the sale of bonds five thousand *chervónetz* (ducats). Yes, and he asked to play again the following day. To-morrow, instead of one bag of gold he'll bring two. Don't yawn; play with gold, but with gold only. We know the value of paper money, which one can make for himself—"

"Thou bawlst again," interrupted his companion, seeing that nothing could be done with him, as the champagne had completely loosed his cousin's tongue. To spare himself this dangerous conversation, he hastened his steps and walked ahead.

These companions were none other than Makárov, the master of Natásha, and his cousin and confidant, Továrov. For many oppressions and cruelties to his serfs Makárov had been deprived of the right to administer his estate. He then went to St. Petersburg with his cousin and comrade. There they lived enigmatically, which is not rare in both capitals of Russia.

Makárov had already twice been under investigation on suspicion of counterfeiting banknotes. But he had ties with the police, whom he had once served as a spy; so that both times he had timely warning by them of the intended search, and of course nothing was found. The principal occupation of the cousins was the plucking of country people. They made them drunk, brought in cards, and, without any conscientious scruples, cleaned them to a thread.

One morning Továrov met Natásha on the Nevsky Prospect and, knowing his cousin's passion for her, set out to follow the girl, but lost her. When Makárov learned that Továrov had seen her, his passion glowed with new fire. He swore that he would find Natásha and that she should belong to him, cost what it might.

Reaching the corner of the Obukhóvsky Prospect, Makárov descended into the wine cellar. Továrov followed him. At their entrance the door bell rang

lightly. Trofímich, the owner of the place, without getting out of his seat, looked at them suspiciously, but recognizing old acquaintances, he again sank into drowsiness.

"A bottle of Madeira, of the very best, in the back room," called Makárov.

Trofímich leisurely went to fill the order, murmuring in a hollow voice: "For a truth, they have become somehow painfully important to-day. It strikes me that they ought to be content with a few glasses of *tmina* (a native drink).

"Petrúsha!" he called to the waiter, "pour out two glasses of *tmina.*

"Iván Andréyevich, this is the last time that I shall let you have it on credit," he said, turning to Makárov.

"*Bolván* (blockhead), who says anything about credit? A bottle of the very best Madeira; otherwise the devil be with thee!" coarsely blustered Makárov at Trofímich, and threw a brand new *poluimperial* (five rubles) on the table. At the sight of the gold the drowsiness left the saloonkeeper at once, and he jumped up as if he had been shaken.

"At your service, Iván Andréyevich; it will be served immediately."

"Petrúsha, hast thou not heard that Iván Andréyevich wants a bottle of Maderia? Lively!"

"Would you not drink a glass with me, Iván Andréyevich," he said, turning to Makárov.

"Of course, old greybeard!" churlishly replied Továrov.

"The gentlemen must have become rich," continued the proprietor, not paying attention to Továrov's remark. "You have likely received an inheritance, or perhaps a sweetheart presented you with a gold find in Siberia. Excellent, excellent! Now, since the gentlemen have become rich, would they mind to pay something on account? It is a long time since they paid anything."

"Here, take this, hungry dog!" Makárov said, throwing to him several *poluimperials*. He and his cousin then went into the back room.

"Whom have these rascals robbed again?" murmured the proprietor. "However, what is that to me? They have paid; the rest is their business—They will likely end in Siberia," he added profoundly, and began to dream again.

In the back room were assembled representatives of all ages, beginning with an old gray-haired rogue, apparently the leader of the whole band, and ending with young men, almost boys. The gray-haired old man seldom took immediate part in the night expeditions; he only formed the plans and located the booty, and by virtue of his experience and former power he succeeded in obtaining the authority over this circle; they obeyed him like a prophet. There were not a few suspicious characters of middle age, whose laughter resembled the growl of hungry wolves. There were also spies who found it agreeable to feast at the expense of their future victims. Some played cards, winning and losing with equal equanimity.

In one corner of the room a group surrounded a red-haired fellow, with a tangled beard, and with a deck of greasy cards in his hands. As he shuffled the cards to the right and to the left were heard the calls:

"*Tzélkovy* (silver-ruble piece) on the jack," "*Paroli* from the seven," and such like terms. The dealer answered without delay: "The jack is beaten; seven takes it," etc.

Other groups played "*durachky*" (game at cards) or dominoes, and boasted of their success. Before some of them stood bottles of *vodka,* Kherson, Madeira, and even champagne. To these people, as long as their hands could wield a hammer, a knife, or a skeleton key, money came easy. A thief cannot long enjoy freedom, in view of which fact he makes the most of it while he may.

The cousins entered almost unobserved, as the noise around the red-haired dealer drowned every other noise. It was observed that with a skilful movement he turned down a card on which there was a handsome amount.

"Thou hast swindled, Sherwood; the nine-spot ought to come on the left side!" screamed several voices.

"You lie!" protested Sherwood.

"I just saw the nine-spot on top; what has become of it?"

"How am I to know it? When it comes out you will see it."

"Thou art a knave!" shouted a broad-shouldered fellow, striking the table with his fist.

"Don't scold; I play honestly," retorted Sherwood, quickly putting into his pockets the money which formed the bank. "Moreover, if you are going to quarrel, I shall not play any more." At these words he hurled the cards on the table.

This red-haired faro dealer was none other than that very Sherwood who became infamous by his informing against the *Dekabristy.**

His history is as follows:

He was the son of an English locksmith, once rich, but later ruined. The son became a teacher of foreign languages at the house of the rich landlord Ushákov, in the province of Smolensk. The latter had two daughters. Sherwood fell in love with one of them, and they were married secretly. As he could not hope to make his marriage public, since he had neither position nor rank, he determined to enter the army and advance to the rank of an officer, and thus succeed in having his marriage acknowledged. By the recommendation of General Staal, Sherwood was enrolled in the Bukh Regiment of Ulans, and later he was recommended to K. L. Davídov as an experienced builder, to erect flour mills. In the house of Davídov he had occasion to see periodically the same persons visiting the place, among whom there seemed to be an intimacy. Being

*On the 26th of December, 1825, two days after the publication of Nicholas' manifesto announcing his own accession, the conspirators of The Society of the North raised some troops and threw themselves on the Place du Sénat. The Emperor had placed himself opposite the insurgents, and ordered his soldiers to fire. Many were killed, and five hundred were taken prisoners. The rebels were called *"Dekabristy,"* because the revolt took place in December—*Dyekabr* in Russian.

curious by nature and an intriguer from choice, Sherwood began to watch and listen, through door chinks and keyholes, to the conversation of the guests. From what he could catch, he concluded that they were conspirators whose object was the transformation of the Russian Empire; in a word, to bring about a complete change in the form of government, which would free the serfs, introduce a constitution; and, in case of stubbornness on the part of the Tsar, overthrow the dynasty of Holstein-Gottorp, otherwise called "Romanof," and to proclaim the Federation of Russian Republics, with complete autonomy to Siberia, the Caucasus, Little Russia, and Poland.

Sherwood became drunk and dizzy from satisfaction at having accidentally discovered such a treasure. The head of the foreigner at once swarmed with plans. To become distinguished, obtain the rank of an officer, which would make a lawful marriage possible, and to get a considerable sum as a reward without work—this was his ambition. He immediately dispatched a note to the much-feared Arakchéyev, requesting him to arrange a meeting with the Emperor, whom he would personally inform of the discovery of a conspiracy against the government.

Sherwood obtained what he asked. After an interview with the Emperor he was given a free hand to unearth the conspirators everywhere. He showed his zeal in the most outrageous manner, shamelessly including in his reports the commanding officers of his own battalion who had no part in the affair.

A frightful tempest of prosecution followed. Searches, arrests, the disappearance of people without any trace, exile, and executions were the order of the day. In proportion as grief and misery increased among the intelligent families of Russia, Sherwood's career mounted higher. He was created a *práporschik* (ensign), with a transfer to the bodyguard of the Dragoon Regiment (afterwards the Horseguards), with an addition of *"vyerny"* (faithful) to his family name; and, by a supreme patent of nobility he was, for his services to the "throne of his country," elevated to the dignity of a Russian nobleman. Nicholas could not inflict a deeper wound to the native nobility than by this action. Soon after this Sherwood was promoted to *porúchik* (lieutenant) and captain. All these advances were accomplished in the course of three months. But neither the affixed adjective of "faithful" nor the gracious favors served to change, as a contemporary says, his inborn low propensities. Sherwood's self-consciousness and impudence went too far. He antagonized and displeased everybody, and they turned away from him in disgust. The Emperor himself noticed his low impulses, and dismissed him from the service; but with a pension.*

*All the newly created nobles, like Sherwood, the son of an English locksmith, or another, a hatter of the city of Kostróma, Osip Komisárov (endowed with the adjective "Kostromsky"), who were thus elevated, besotted themselves out of their circle. Komisárov for example, wearied his instructor Todtleben to such a degree that it became necessary to convey him to Tashkent, where so many of the high-appointed official scoundrels are being drafted off for every kind of rascality.

A government pension was insufficient for his wants; so he frequented saloons, selling the secrets which he overheard there to the police, practiced crooked gambling, as we have just seen him, and thus supplied the deficit in his pockets.

The storm which had gathered over his head soon calmed down; the thief world is very considerate to each other. As soon as the arrival of Makárov and Továrov was noticed, the crowd rushed to greet them heartily.

"Hello! there you are, at last!" called to them a youth not more than eighteen years old. (Regardless of his young years, he was not a novice in crime. At the age of sixteen he murdered his father for the sake of a few rubles, and ran away from his village. The police had looked for him in vain since then.) "We have heard that they are going to put you on the black mare* to-morrow, and award you the Andréyev cross."†

"Silence, milksop," ordered the old cutthroat, who had escaped from Siberia twice. "One must never recall such things. May God and the Holy Trinity protect us from the black mare and the Andréyev cross."

"We are not of your breed, fool *muzhíks;* the black mare and the Andréyev cross are for you, and not for us," interposed Továrov, as Makárov stepped aside with one of his fellow-counterfeiters, who whispered something in his ear.

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*The black gallows to which convicted criminals are tied.

†A knout with which the hangman lays blows on the back of the criminal in the form of a cross.

"Yes, I forget that you nobles make the laws which forbid us to steal, so that you may do so more conveniently and profitably."

"We do not call it stealing, but getting things by business methods," corrected Továrov.

In the meantime Makárov continued his whispered conversation with the counterfeiter.

"It is difficult," he said, "to get rid of thy notes. Yesterday I wanted to change a twenty-five ruble note at Palkin's, but the accursed saloonkeeper turned it around in his hands, looked at it from all sides, and asked me who I was, and where I got that money. He had already been taken in twice with such notes, and the police ordered him to hold any one who offered like currency, he said. Fortunately, a friend turned up, an officer of the police court—thou knowest him, the one who hid thy protested check for eight thousand rubles; he redeemed me by declaring that the paper was all right and took it himself, so that I had to give the saloonkeeper a genuine piece of money."

"The *mersávetz* (scoundrel) will exchange it in his office for good money."

"I am sure of it; but that is not to the point. My friend and protector left the saloon with me, had me take a seat with him in a carriage, and demanded five hundred rubles from me if I did not wish to be arrested at once."

"And thou hast—"

"I paid him," interrupted the counterfeiter, "only half that amount, as I had no more money with me.

The other half I am to pay him to-morrow. Thou must obtain it for me, if not—"

"Dost not lie?" interrupted Makárov suspiciously.

"If thou dost not believe me, thou canst go to the *chinovnik* (officer) with me to-morrow morning."

"No, thanks; I don't wish that we should be seen together. As regards the money, here it is," said Makárov, with a sigh, and handed his companion a package of *poluimperials*.

In the meantime, Továrov, who also had several ducats, could not resist the temptation to show it boastingly before Sherwood. The eyes of the old crook shone with greed at the sight of the gold.

"Gold? Now, Brother Továrov, thou shouldst treat us to something. Not so, brothers?" he turned to the others.

"Of course, at least a few bottles of *tmina*," several voices exclaimed.

"No *tmina* for me; to-day I treat to champagne."

"Long live Továrov," shouted the crooks.

"What is champagne but sweet water?" exclaimed several, among them a gray-haired old man. "If thou really wouldst treat us, then thou hadst better order several bottles of Kherson and rum; this will at least tickle the palate."

"Petrúsha, champagne, kheres, and rum—quick! Here is a gold ruble for thyself."

Petrúsha flew away in an instant; the sight of gold lends wings to waiters. Two of the crooks, playing checkers, and often doing honor to *popérechnik*, fell to quarreling. One of the players, a little pock-marked old man, called the other, a robust fel-

low, an opprobrious name, for which he received such a crack that he tumbled off the chair. The old man jumped up in a rage, pulled out a sharp knife from his bootleg and plunged it to the very hilt into the breast of his antagonist. The whole thing was done in an instant.

"What hast thou done, Andréich? The devil take thee! Bring some sand, quick, before the floor gets covered with blood. Go in a hurry for an *isvoshchik* (hack-driver). Andréich, we must get rid of him at once. Two of us will take him under the arms, and drag him out like a drunken person. He must be taken to the Kalinkin Bridge and thrown into the Fontanka, whence he will be carried into the sea; then let them find him; to the devil with him. A dog gets a dog's death; he deserves no sympathy; he stole at least five hundred rubles of me, when we together killed a merchant from Kostróma. While I dragged the dead man to the ice hole, I gave the merchant's watch and pocketbook to him, and the thief afterwards said that there was but ten rubles."

The *isvoshchik* arrived in the meantime; two of the crooks caught the murdered man under the arms, and staggering, as if drunk, the trio went out into the street.

"Ah, Trofímich, where is the champagne?" screamed Makárov in maudlin voice.

"Yes, champagne!" roared an old crook in a deafening voice. "Bring the champagne! I drink today, for to-morrow I must be sober. I have no money to-day, but I have credit," he said, bursting

out in laughter. "Trofímich, wilt thou not credit me?"

"Of course, certainly," said Trofímich, knowing better than to joke with the old cutthroat. Once already he had encountered his fist, and did not wish to do so again. "But please tell me why you have to be sober to-morrow. That is an unusual occurrence with thee, thou old knave." The last he added in a whisper and glancing around to see if any one had heard him.

"The more thou knowest, the older thou growest, old friend. What I intend to do thou needst not know, blue-nosed old fool!" replied the ancient crook.

"Don't be silly, Andréy Petróvich," murmured the saloonkeeper, "I only wanted—"

"To betray me. I well know that thou stealest everything from us first and then betrayest us to the vultures," replied Petróvich. "For my undertaking I need only a spy and a clever penman, and I shall apply to Sherwood and Makárov."

"Not so loud, the walls have ears," warned Makárov.

"Not here. The only dangerous ones are those of the old rogue Trofímich and of his worthy servant Petrúsha; but some day I'll cut them off. Drink out and listen; the business is important. Thou, Sherwood, must—" he whispered something in his ear.

"Impossible," retorted Sherwood hopelessly. "Since the time I told the Prince Orlov of the ghosts in the cellar, and the *pristav* disappeared in such a

mysterious manner, my credit has been lost with him; that's how—"

"But that has nothing to do with our business. The devil take the *pristav* and his soldiers. If the devil were only sensible, he would gather up the whole rabble that robs us, good, brave fellows, and takes from us almost three-fourths of our booty and in the end sends us to prison. While this snake-breed lives, one of our sort cannot do much. That's what it has come to."

With these words he struck the table such a blow with his fist that the bottles and glasses were shattered. "But I wish that thou shalt again be favored by the Prince. In a word, I have discovered something for which he would be thankful to thee, and would cover thee with gold from head to foot."

"Oh, thou liest! Thou hast smelled out something, and didst not personally inform!" grunted Sherwood suspiciously.

"Dog!" thundered Petróvich. "Dost not know that while I am a cutthroat, I am not a spy? Moreover, I do not think I should tell thee anything about it. These people consult and plan for 'the good of Russia.' "

"Then it must be some kind of a conspiracy," exclaimed Sherwood exultingly.

"How am I to know what it is called? There are all classes of people in it—officers, nobles, burghers, and peasants like ourselves. I wanted to join them myself, to see how they do things, but they would not accept me;" and he doubled his fists. "I know

where they assemble, and at once thought it was a great find for the old rogue Sherwood."

Sherwood was not in the least hurt over the epithets applied to him by Petróvich; and, like a hungry wolf scenting prey, he eagerly took in every word.

"But where do they meet?" he asked impatiently.

"When the time comes I'll tell thee. Let us return to our business. To-morrow morning we'll have to—" The remainder of the conversation was in such a low breath that even the experienced ears of Trofímich could not catch it. It was only possible to make out a few broken words, disconnected, as "a young girl," "a soldier with a wounded arm," etc.

Ending his talk, Petróvich added: "That means that the business is arranged. If thou wilt go at it right, thou wilt learn where—"

"The conspirators meet?" broke in Sherwood. "Tell me now, uncle."

"It is a matter of indifference what they are called, conspirators or anything else. On the 14th of December, while I was still serving in the Moscow Regiment, they gave us plenty to drink and we were to shout 'Constitution!' We yelled lustily, in the full assurance that it was in honor of Constantine's wife, in whose name we obtained the *vodka*. We also took a shot at everything we put our eyes on. I remember taking aim at a young guard lieutenant. Bang! and he tumbled off the horse. When I saw him again he was a cripple, but a lieutenant-general. My bullet, which shattered his arm, brought

him good luck. They called us, also, conspirators then.*

"The regiment was disbanded, and I was sent to the Caucasus, where I would have been now if a happy thought had not suggested to me to leave there. Drink this glass, Sherwood, to the success of our undertaking.

"Now is thy turn, Makárov; dost thou know how to make a fictitious will?"

Makárov looked around nervously.

"What art thou looking about thee for like a fox caught in a hencoop? Do we not know thy skill? There is five thousand rubles as thy share in this business."

"But there won't be— Thou understandest me, Petróvich?" and he made an eloquent motion with his hand. "I don't like such things; it is dangerous—"

"Because thou art not on thine own land," interrupted Petróvich. "They say that there thou hadst no scruples about such trifles. But that's thine own affair. The business was proposed to me by the heirs, and as I have never lost time on learning, I at once thought of thee; thou art an excellent fellow in this regard. Therefore it is necessary that thou and Továrov should sign the will as witnesses."

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*According to the monarchical historians, the ignorant soldiers believed that Constitution was the name of Constantine's wife. The revolt of the 14/26th of December was caused by the troops being persuaded that the news of Constantine's resignation was false, and that the oath of allegiance to Nicholas was a sacrilege. They shouted, "Long live the Constitution!" misunderstanding its import.

"Not for any consideration," said Makárov; "this is altogether too dangerous."

"Wherein is the danger? Thou hast done worse things. The testator's signature we'll obtain by frightening the old man; there is a girl at his house about whom he is a fool."

"A girl?" asked Makárov, with curiosity.

"Yes, a girl, the old dog. A charming girl; rosy like an apple, and the eyes—great eyes! No wonder she turned the old man's head."

"Is she his daughter?"

"No, there's the secret. She has been with him only a few weeks, and God knows, or rather the devil may find out, who she is and where she came from. She does not leave his bedside for a second, and gives him his medicine. Very likely the old gray-beard scented danger, because Kurdyubékov—"

"Which Kurdyubékov?"

"Why, the old man's son, who thinks that his father lives painfully long, and fears that he means to deprive him of the inheritance just because he lived fast and played pranks for which he almost landed in Siberia. The devil alone knows how he untangled himself. I know only that he did come off, and since then he has been without means, and as the old man does not want to help him—"

"My cousin will help him," said Makárov, smiling.

"Thy cousin?" asked Petróvich, in surprise.

"Yes, my cousin, or I should say my mother's nephew; our fathers married sisters. And so I am to write the will of my uncle. Very well, Petróvich, with the greatest pleasure. I trust that my cousin

will permit me to bequeath myself a little something. And so there is a girl at uncle's. Ah, but he is an old sinner!"

In his mind suddenly rose the thought: "Is not this girl my Natásha? Who knows? But how did she come to him? Where could he have found her? I must see her; I must be convinced. Továrov met her twice. Why did fate not throw her in my way?" reflected Makárov. Then he said aloud: "To-morrow we will arrange this matter. However, thou must take me to uncle; I am consumed with impatience to receive his blessing."

"But perhaps thou wishest to capture the girl? I shall not yield thee this morsel; I shall have her for myself. Write the will and receive thy five thousand rubles; there's the end to it. Thou shalt see neither thy uncle nor the girl; as far as I know him, thy visit would not be to his taste. And now, since the business is arranged, let us take another drink," concluded the old crook.

Makárov stared at him fixedly and did not reply.

"Champagne," shouted Petróvich.

The orgy became livelier and louder, when suddenly, in the first compartment of the cellar, three bottles fell to the floor, one after the other at regular intervals, and were shattered with a crash. The talk was hushed at once, for the falling of the bottles served as a signal that the police were not far away. All sharpened their ears and listened uneasily.

In a few minutes voices were heard outside. "They are coming," nervously whispered the rogues.

In fact, there entered into the room a *pristav* with a half-dozen policemen. The assembled persons,

suppressing their breathing, waited without daring to raise their eyes.

"I am very sorry that I am obliged to trouble you. But why do you cause it? Where is a certain Dimitry Sergéich?"

No one answered.

"Boys, I ask you in all sincerity. You well know my friendly disposition toward you; I look on many things through my fingers for which another would make you pay dearly. But this time I cannot do anything. I hope you won't precipitate yourselves into trouble by hiding from me Dimitry Sergéich. I shall have to arrest you all, and many of you are in arrears. Well, where is Dimitry Sergéich?"

"Here!" was heard a voice from the corner.

"Come here, then, friend! Why, thou art a jester as is seldom seen! Look at this brave fellow! He stole a horse from a Cossack before the very palace. For such a prank they ought to make it possible for thee to escape. And the Emperor desires to see thee in person. Because of that, I hope thou willst pardon me if I place these ornaments on thee." At these words he ordered his men to put chains on the hands and feet of Sergéich.

"Ah, you drink champagne here. Well, let's see its quality. The *pristav* poured out a glass and drank it down at a gulp. "Not bad, not bad; and so as not to limp on one leg, it is well to drink another little glassful." The *pristav* poured out the wine and drank it, saying: "Your health, friends! And I shall drink a third one for the sake of the Holy Trinity. By the by, *Gospodín* Makárov, you

and your cousin will also trouble yourselves to follow me."

Makárov shuddered and walked up to the *pristav,* shoving a package of gold rubles into his hand. The latter quietly let the money slip into his pocket, and, shrugging his shoulders, said:

"Impossible, *golúbchik* (dear) Makárov. You know that I am your friend, and that I am always ready to serve you, but to-day it is impossible; the general ordered me to bring you before him. As a house is not erected without four corners, I shall drink a fourth glass to your health, boys."

"And what does Galáshev* want with me?"

"The old stories about gambling give you no rest. The Emperor himself learned something about it."

Makárov shoved another roll of money into his hand.

"I cannot follow you. Say that you did not find me," requested Makárov in a whisper. "Shall the opportunity to find Natásha escape me?" reflected the lover sadly.

"Be sensible, *golúbchik* Makárov," retorted the *pristav,* quietly letting the money fall into his pocket. "You ought to know that when I say 'impossible,' it means impossible. I must take you to the chief of police this very night. The Emperor ordered that you be found; that means that you must be taken. We shall see later how we can help you." Saying which, he scratched his right palm with his finger, and then made a motion as if he were counting money.

*The chief of police of St. Petersburg at the time.

"Take a drink, Makárov and Továrov, for we shall have to breathe the cold and damp night air; I will show you a good example. Our holy churches always have five cupolas; I drink to your health! And now, *do svidaniya,* brothers."

The *pristav* left the room accompanied by his prisoners. The first, as a peasant, was in chains; and the other two, as gentlemen, were only under convoy.

CHAPTER IX

SAVELYÉV FINDS IMPORTANT PAPERS

In the Izmáylov district, on the street called Devyátaya Róta (Ninth Company), stood a large one-story gray house. This house was evidently occupied by a rich family. One evening every week luxurious carriages crowded at its coach-entry; the windows were lighted up brightly, and music was heard until long past midnight. Exactly opposite this house was a court wing. This wing was occupied by the very poor. Lodging was not rented by the room, but by corners; or, rather, the rooms were occupied by as many people as there was room for bedsteads. In one such room stood four beds, and near each of them a little table with a cupboard. One of these beds belonged to our friend Savelyév.

The young man sat buried in deep thought. He recalled his past; his childhood; the Gátchina Asylum. Then his thoughts involuntarily ran over into the future; but it appeared to him as uninviting as the past. In his life everything was dark and sad; but now there stole in a ray of light. He had met Natásha, and loved her passionately, with all the fire of youth. But had he a right to love, being, as he was, an escaped convict?

To-day he could give himself freely over to his reflections, for all his neighbors had betaken themselves to the saloons and drinking houses, celebrating the day of the Emperor's namesake and patron saint, *Nikoláy Tchudotvórez* (the miracle worker). All his thoughts concentrated on the past. He recalled Siberia, the Caucasus, his first meeting with Natásha, and particularly the journey to St. Petersburg; how he learned to know her better on the road, and to estimate her personal qualities. Both of them hoped to find protection at the feet of the Emperor, not suspecting that the Tsar can be reached only by exalted persons, while to the poor the way was obstructed by insurmountable obstacles. Long did he think of Natásha, and his thoughts wandered to his grandmother.

Two months ago he and Natásha had accidentally heard the name of the witch. Natásha asked him to go to Marfúsha. The reader knows of Savelyév's visit to the fortune teller. From that time on he never once thought of her, but now her figure stood outlined before his eyes, with a knitted forehead and a menacing hand. Recalling to mind Marfúsha, brought to his memory the box which he brought home on the day of the great storm and which he had entirely forgotten.

Savelyév took out the box from the cupboard, placed it on the table, opened it, and began to look into its contents. He found various kinds of gold and silver coins, and more or less valuable rings and earrings. Each article was wrapped in a piece of paper, with an inscription showing from whom,

when, and for what received. Then there was a mass of memoranda and letters. Savelyév looked only at the signatures; many of them were those of the most noted magnates.

Although the young soldier looked over all the articles and letters, his mind was nevertheless on Natásha, and he was only interested in the articles in the package in so far as they might be useful for Natásha. But what good could these papers do her?

Finally a bundle of old letters, grown yellow with age and tied crosswise with a black ribbon, attracted his attention. On the package was inscribed: "To the son of my daughter." Savelyév untied it and looked it over carelessly. After the first glance, however, his attention was riveted on the yellow sheets. The more he read, the greater became his curiosity. These letters were short and unimportant; but what made them interesting were the signatures. All of them were from two persons, as the signatures showed. The first set, almost falling to pieces, bearing the signature of Kondrátya Niléyev, were written from the jail, and directed to the wife. One of them was scratched with a pin on maple-wood paper. Here are its contents:

Proschây (farewell), poor dove; without realizing, thou hast served as a weapon for the destruction of thy husband. Thou hadst hoped to save him, but instead, thou hast ruined him and his comrades. Unfortunately we have no son to whom I can bequeath vengeance. If our Anyúta should ever have a son, he must avenge me and my associates, who are lost through me. Pray for thy Kondrat.

The following paper was of an entirely different character: "In November, 1829, a male child was

placed in the Gátchina Orphan Asylum, under the name of Iván Savelyév."

The third was a clipping from a newspaper, in which was stated that Sergeant Iván Savelyév, for taking part in the conspiracy of Petrashévsky, was sent to Siberia for ten years, after which term he is to be exiled indefinitely.

Then followed notes like the following:

"I cannot come to-day," or "Look for me at 11 o'clock." There were not a few of these notes, all signed "Nikoláy." Only one letter bearing this signature was a long one:

Thou sayest, my friend, that our child was a son. But what became of him? It is not possible that thou dost not know. Tell me. Reflect that the fate and happiness of thy son depends on this. No, thou dost not know. I well know thy soul; it is as pure as an angel and is not capable of falsehood. To-day, when I interrogated thee and looked into thine eyes, thou couldst not have endured my glance if there had been a secret in thy heart. I am accustomed to read the hearts of people; in thee there is no guile. Nevertheless, the disappearance of the boy is incomprehensible. Where is he? For what purpose has he been kidnapped? I ordered that a search be made, but could not do it officially. Use all thy efforts to help me find him that I may make sure for him a brilliant future; or at least try to find the midwife.

Then followed a letter in a very illegible hand:

Anyúta, my dear child, they son liveth. He is in the Gátchina Orphan Home, under No. 2137, and under the name of Iván Savelyév. Remember that thy father has appointed him to avenge his death.

Then came some lines written in a light, nervous chirography:

My son, if ever these lines should fall into thy hands, think that the dead do not need to be avenged. They are now angels of God, and surround the throne of the Allhighest; He is

their protector and their avenger. What am I saying—avenger? Our Creator is a God of love and forgiveness; that means that we also must forgive our fellows. Within a few minutes I shall myself stand before the face of the Almighty, and I have just learned that thou art alive. I could give thee a brilliant position, as people regard it, but to what purpose? Better remain simply Iván Savelyév, an unknown orphan. The career which I could create for thee is dangerous; thou wouldst be envied and hated. Perhaps it might bring thee death, and I do not wish that thou, my son, born in tears, shouldst perish. I wish that thou mayst live long. Thou wilt be happier as Iván Savelyév than as an illegitimate son of the Tsar. Good-by, dear son; I bless thee and bequeath thee love and forgiveness, but not vengeance.

The soldier read and re-read these lines. Is it possible that he had found his mother? There could be no doubt of it. Those lines could only have been written by her. But who was she? The letter was signed "Márya Assénkova"; but he could not recall having heard that name before, which is not surprising, since the fame of actresses is not perpetual; scarcely does the curtain fall on their lives when their existence is forgotten.

But nevertheless there is a charm in the word "mother" even to one who never experienced motherly caresses. The thought that he was the illegitimate son of the Emperor did not disturb him. He only thought of his mother. Judging by her letter, she had been unfortunate, and this thought brought tears to his eyes. He took her letter and put it away next to his heart. He then closed the box and hid it.

CHAPTER X

COUNT NESSELRODE AND THE TSAR

A thick layer of snow covered the gardens of the Gátchina Palace, whose windows sparkled with light. From the rigging of a frigate which was anchored in the lake had been suspended vari-colored lanterns in the vain endeavor to lend a holiday air to the place. In the palace, as throughout the Empire, there was a great fête—the anniversary of the namesake of the Emperor. Nicholas preferred to celebrate the occasion not in the noisy capital, as in former times, but in the quiet Gátchina. Saint *Nikoláy Tchudotvóretz* (miracle worker), his patron, and the protector of all the Empire, seemed to have turned away his face from orthodox Russia. Formerly the representatives of foreign countries hurried to greet the mighty colossus on that day; but now their number has dwindled. There were only Keneritz of Saxony, Werter of Prussia, and lastly Count Walenstein-Esterhazy of Austria, who, in pursuance of his Emperor's order, added to the customary greeting, in his gingerly voice, that if peace was not concluded by the month of March, Austria would be compelled to take a part against Russia.

The Emperor attended the palace church in the morning, but he as well as the *protopope* (arch-

priest) were "absent-minded." The latter almost dropped the cup out of his hand when he looked into the agitated face of the Emperor—Nicholas had confessed to him the evening before. Evidently the confession was of great importance, since the dark clouds had not since then left the face of the priest. After liturgy the Emperor devoted several hours to work. He dispatched an order to Finland replacing Rakosóvsky by Den. Then he read a report from Ménchikov, from the Crimea. After reading it through he said:

"They are hurling stones at Ménchikov now, but the coming generations will erect a splendid monument to his memory out of those very stones."

His sons, whom he was accustomed to see around him on this solemn occasion, were far away. The two youngest, Nikoláy and Mikhaíl, were in the Crimea, endeavoring to earn for themselves the Geórgiev crosses; Alexander, the heir to the throne, was in Poland in readiness to strike out against Austria. Constantine was occupied with strengthening Kronstadt as a protection against an attack on St. Petersburg by the allied fleets, and could only come for a minute to greet and kiss the hand of his father. The Empress Aleksandra Fedorówna was again too ill to leave her apartments. The occurrences of the 14th of December, 1825, had badly shaken her nervous system, and she had not rallied; and the misfortunes of the last war had weakened her already poor health.

The Emperor sat before his writing table, supporting his head on his hands and mechanically

glancing over Ménchikov's report. Opposite him was seated General Sukhozánet, who looked at the Tsar as if he wished to ask something.

"My brave soldiers are fighting heroically at Sebastopol," Nicholas said thoughtfully. "Their resistance is unheard of in military history. And my youngest sons are celebrating their father's patron-saint day on battlefields dyed with the blood of my troops. General, one month's service at Sebastopol is to be credited as a year to every soldier there."

"Your Majesty, think—" interrupted the minister of war.

"What! Am I to consider that this allowance is an extraordinary one? So is the heroism of my soldiers extraordinary—without a parallel in the history of war."

"Your Majesty, think of the envy this will call forth among the rest of the army, who are no less willing to sacrifice their lives for Your Majesty. They can not all be at Sebastopol."

"This is my wish," replied the Emperor in a voice which permitted no reply. The minister silently bowed low.

"Dannenberg must not remain at Sebastopol. His delay was the only cause of our defeat at the Black River."

"Sire!" Sukhozánet made bold to remark, "consider the unfavorable season, the fogs, the mud—"

"A general ought to know how to overcome obstacles. Dannenberg shall be removed."

Sukhozánet remained silent.

"Whom shall we send in his place?" asked the Tsar; but without waiting for a reply from the minister, he said reflectingly: "Osten-Sacken."

"Sire," said the minister, "again a German name; a German family."

The Tsar raised his head. "Ah," he said, "dost thou also belong to the so-called 'Russian Party?' By thy advice I sent Muraviév to the Caucasus, and what has he accomplished there? He permitted himself to be beaten by Williams and Lek, two Englishmen. And now thou wouldst likely advise me to appoint Ermólov commander-in-chief."

"Sire, there is much in a name. In 1812 what Barclay de Toly could not do, Kutúsov, an 80-year-old man, with one foot in the grave, accomplished because the will of the people—"

"The will of the people?" the Emperor broke in angrily. "What is that thing, the will of the people? Do the men who surround my throne perhaps share the views of the French Revolution?"

"Sire," Sukhozánet answered in a low but firm voice, "you know my feelings; you know that I would consider that minute as a fortunate one when the opportunity should present itself to sacrifice my life for Your Imperial Highness. But permit me, as a faithful servant, to tell you the truth. What is needed now is a man whose name alone will awaken the spirit of the troops. Forty years ago the nobility and the substantial men of Moscow unanimously chose Kutúsov as commander for this reason; Yermólov—"

Again that hated name! And it is thou, Sukhozánet, who pronouncest it! Have I not made severe remarks to the nobility of Moscow for selecting Yermólov as commander of the militia? Have I not stated plainly that while I live Yermólov shall receive no appointment?"

"Your Majesty's deceased brother said the same thing when the name of Kutúsov was proposed to him again. The will of the people—"

"Insubordination!" interrupted the Emperor. "Thou hast spoken of names. Since when has the name of Nicholas lost its terror? Since when have the people, as thou wordest it, become bold enough to demand another? While I live, I shall lead the Russian army to victory. Enough words! Osten-Sacken is to take the place of Dannenberg in the Caucasus."

The minister of war bowed in silence.

"How is the Yégersky Regiment getting on?"

"Sire, Count Peróvsky—"

"Adjutant-General Peróvsky," corrected the Emperor.

Sukhozánet looked at him in astonishment.

"As far as I know, Count Lev Peróvsky has never been a soldier."

"Here is his appointment as adjutant-general, which thou wilt immediately hand to him," curtly retorted the Emperor.

Sukhozánet bowed again in silence. The ministers of Nicholas' cabinet were not his counselors, but the blind tools of his caprices and his obstinate will. The minister of war, who had participated

in many a battle, who fought at Borodino and at Fer-Champengas, heartily despised the bureaucrats, who earned the thick epaulets and titles of adjutant-general while sitting in their office, pen in hand.

"Where is Den?" asked the Tsar.

"Adjutant-General Den, Your Majesty, is inspecting the fortifications near the Baltic."

"What regiments will pass through St. Petersburg to-day and to-morrow?"

"None to-day; to-morrow the Third Astrakan Regiment of Cossacks and the Fifth Bashkir Militia."

"Where are they going?"

"The Cossacks to the Narva and the Bashkirs to Abo."

"Very well; I shall go to St. Petersburg to-morrow to meet my brave soldiers. Thou mayest go now."

The minister of war bowed and went to the door.

The Emperor called him back.

"I have appointed Arbúsov, now colonel of the Preobrazhénsky Regiment, commander of the archers of the royal family. The commission must appear in the bulletin to-morrow."

Sukhozánet bowed again, but the Emperor stopped him once more.

"I have been informed that there is being practiced all conceivable abuses and irregularities at the clinics and hospitals. In Riga dead soldiers have been carried on the lists as alive, while at Sebastopol the army remained without meat for two days. Institute a strict investigation, for which I shall hold thee

responsible. Let the Ryasansk, Tambovsk, and Kursk Militia move to the seat of war."

Nicholas' passion was to meddle in the minutest details of governmental affairs and military activity. He wanted to arrange everything personally, which course caused many misfortunes. Not a regiment could move without his knowledge; not a state building could be erected without first having the plan submitted to him for approval.

At length Sukhozánet left the Emperor's presence, and his place was taken by the old chancellor, Count Nesselrode, who administered the foreign affairs of Russia for fifty years. He was tall and slender, with a striking resemblance to Prince Metternich. His features were thin and regular. The sparse, snow-white hair protruded from his high forehead. His gray-green eyes were keenly penetrating. In his manners as well as in dress he endeavored to imitate the famous Metternich, priding himself with having been his pupil. Like Metternich, he owed his position to his great wealth, which he handled like a genuine Sybarite. He walked in with a light step, which would have done credit to a dancer.

"What news?" asked the Emperor.

"Prince Górtchakov reports that at the last conference, which took place at Count Westmoreland's house on account of the latter's illness—"

"Westmoreland ill? Nonsense! He planned to have this conference at his house; that's all. He wanted the others to come to him instead of his going to them. And they were so foolish—"

"Sire," interrupted the statesman, "Mahomet, who was distinguished for his caution, said, 'If the mountain does not wish to come to me, I shall go to it.' That is the reason why the members of the conference went to Westmoreland."

"Shame upon shame!" sighed the Emperor; and added aloud, "And how stand matters?"

"Our affairs, Your Majesty, are progressing excellently," said the diplomat, rubbing his hands.

"Excellently?" the Emperor asked in surprise.

"Indeed, Your Majesty. The members of the conference, and especially Austria, hold fast to the four points* of the protective treaty."

"And thou seest, therefore, that affairs are in excellent condition? At this rate peace will never be restored."

"Certainly not. Does Your Majesty wish for peace?" asked Nesselrode, naïvely assuming an air of surprise.

The Tsar stared at him.

"While Sebastopol remains in a state of siege?"

The Tsar was silent.

"In that case I shall take the liberty to propose that Your Majesty empower me to accept the four points of the treaty."

"While I live, never! As long as we shall not have attained a brilliant victory, we cannot hope that

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*The four points here alluded to were: The fate of the Danube principalities, the free navigation of the Danube, the limitation of Russian supremacy in the Black Sea, and the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. The attempt to limit Russian supremacy in the Black Sea was the chief point upon which the Powers disagreed.

the allies will renounce the four points, particularly Austria. Ignoble Austria; it was I who saved her from destruction in 1849. What is the use of a conference now?"

"I have already made bold to remark, Your Majesty, that not one of the warring powers wishes peace, Austria the least of all, although she has not as yet taken an active part in the war. Your Majesty well knows Metternich's motto, 'Wait and catch fish in disturbed waters.' But the people must be brought to believe that all efforts were made by the allies to obtain peace, but—"

"But what?" interrupted the Tsar impatiently.

"But that all their efforts failed before the determined will of Your Majesty."

"Well, what is to be done now?"

"Sire, I would make bold to suggest to Your Majesty to turn to the people, in order—"

"Again that despicable word."

"It cannot be helped," observed the statesman, shrugging his shoulders. "It is necessary to follow the example of our neighbors. The allies turn to the people through the newspapers."

"And I am to do likewise? Am I to follow their example?"

"No, Your Majesty; our people are too ignorant to read newspapers. But a manifesto, read in the churches from the altar steps, showing the impossibility of concluding peace, would arouse the patriotism—"

"The idea is a good one. We shall issue such a manifesto, say, on New Year's Day."

"Sire, that time is too far off. Many occurrences may defeat our plans. We have now an excellent occasion—the 14th of December, the day of your accession—"

"The day I subdued the insurgents; unfortunately they were my own soldiers. Well, the day is well chosen. Arrange the declaration, in which state that—"

"That the four points of the treaty are prejudicial to the honor of the empire; that to accept them would mean to allow the allies to humiliate Russia."

"Yes," the Emperor interrupted his statesman, "thou understandest what I wish to be said. Let the declaration be proclaimed on the 14th of December."

The diplomat bowed low. By his natural sagacity he knew how to suggest to the Emperor his own thoughts. Nicholas caught them and appropriated them.

"And so I shall write to Prince Górchakov at Vienna that Your Majesty positively decided to continue—"

"The war, as long as there remains one man whom I can send to the battlefield; as long as I feel myself strong enough to fight and die."

The diplomat bowed and continued:

"I shall write to Prince Górchakov that it is Your Majesty's fixed purpose to continue the war as long as a brilliant victory shall not have given the initiative to peace; but that he shall nevertheless proceed with the negotiations, so that the conference may not be terminated by us, but by our enemies."

"These are diplomatic intrigues," murmured the proud monarch.

"It cannot be helped, Your Majesty. The game is not a pleasant one, but like a game of chess, it requires skill, self-composure, and patience to watch the opportunity to cleverly deceive one's opponent."

The statesman, making a deep bow, was about to retire, but the Emperor, feeling that this time the victory remained with his minister, wished to humiliate him. Nicholas liked to meddle even in the most intimate affairs of his subordinates.

"Wait; I wish to talk to thee about some other matters," called the Tsar.

Count Nesselrode again approached the Emperor.

"Thou hast proposed peace to thy monarch; it appears to me that thou shouldst first of all establish peace in thine own household."

The diplomat looked inquiringly at the Tsar, for he did not understand what he was hinting at. Nesselrode had a daughter and a son. The daughter was married to a retired *rotmister* (captain) of the Horseguard Regiment, Baron Zebakh, with whom she was happy. The old diplomat soon discovered in his son-in-law extraordinary talents in diplomacy. The son, who married the daughter of the famous governor-general of Moscow, Count Zakrévsky, did not find happiness with his wife, but they were both to blame for it.

The statesman reflected how to ward off the blow directed at him.

"Yes," said the Emperor, "I have cause to be dissatisfied with thy family."

The statesman, collecting his wits, replied:

"I am astonished, Your Majesty. It has not been an hour since I received a letter from the Baroness Zebakh, my daughter, from Paris—"

"The selection of this honest German as a husband for thy daughter was the only wise step thou hast taken in thy family affairs. What does she write?"

"Sire, my son-in-law could be useful—"

"We will talk of this another time; we often found in him a careful and faithful servant. But thy son—"

"Sire, how could my son have displeased Your Imperial Highness? He is modest and obedient."

"Better confess that he is a fool, else how could he endure his wife's conduct? It is simply intolerable. Such a scandal at Chevalier's.* The governor-general himself had to be called to restore order and to put an end to the shameful scenes. He imagined that he had to deal with women of light virtue who were having sport with some young bloods. But whom did he find? His own daughter, the wife of the son of my chancellor."

As soon as the chancellor saw whence the blow was coming, he immediately found a means of defense.

"Sire," he said, "my hair has become gray, not so much on account of age as from worry. My only consolation is my daughter, the Baroness Zebakh. My son Dimitry is also a good and excellent man, but unfortunately he is not endowed with great talents. I am not blessed like Your Majesty with

*A noted restaurant in Moscow at the time.

four sons and numerous grandchildren. I have only one son, without the hope of ever having a grandchild, since the Countess Zakrévskaya,* whom he was compelled to marry—"

"Compelled?" asked the Emperor, knitting his brow.

"Was it not the wish of Your Majesty?" asked the diplomat in naïve surprise. "It was only because of this consideration that I gave my consent. Had it not been for that, the daughter of Count Zakrévsky would not have been my daughter-in-law."

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*Young Countess Zakrévskaya, the only daughter of the governor-general of Moscow, was very eccentric, and did not hesitate to declare to everybody that she was not marrying Count Nesselrode for love. When asked why she was marrying at all, then, she made the characteristic reply: "Because he is so ungainly." The questioner naturally expressed astonishment. The Countess noticing his surprise, hastened to explain the meaning of her answer: "Owing to his ungainliness he is the only man in our circle whom my mother would not take as a lover." The old Countess Zakrévskaya was also noted for her dissoluteness. There remains a good story among the old inhabitants of Moscow on this score. It runs as follows:

At the time Count Zakrévsky was governor-general of Moscow there lived a certain Countess Rostópchina, the daughter of the governor-general of Moscow in 1812. This woman was also noted for her loose morals. Once, after having caused a great scandal, Count Zakrévsky sent for her, severely reproached her for her conduct, and threatened to send her out of the city by administrative order. The Countess listened quietly to his moral instructions, and replied: "This is a marvelous coincidence. Just twenty years ago my father sent for your wife to come to this very room, and said to her word for word what you have just said to me. Your wife has not changed; so you had better leave me in peace."

Countess Nesselrode, née Zakrévskaya, is living now. She obtained a divorce from Nesselrode and married her former lover, Prince Drutzky-Zakolínsky.

"I knew that thou and Count Zakrévsky were enemies, and had hoped to put an end to this feud by the alliance. But this is not to the point. There must be an end to the scandalous conduct of thy daughter-in-law. Thy son must return to her."

"Your Majesty, there are instances when parental influence is powerless," answered the chancellor with a deep bow. "Besides, the Countess Nesselrode is living at her father's house, and it strikes me that the governor-general—"

"Very well, very well. Thou must write to him. It is my wish that there be no scandals among persons who stand near my throne. Such is my will; dost thou hear me? Now, go and reflect over the manifesto which is to be proclaimed on the 14th of December."

Count Nesselrode bowed and left the presence of the monarch.

Left alone, the Emperor again sank into reveries. "No, peace must not be established yet. Shall the history of a glorious reign end with an ignominious peace? Never! I shall leave it as a heritage to my son. Although the beginning of his reign will be darkened by clouds, he will succeed in scattering them, and the sun will again illuminate Russia.

"Yes, my son Alexander, my successor. He always talks of progress; of liberal beginnings. His favorite thought is the freeing of the serfs, which would just now undoubtedly surprise and astonish the West, but it is impossible. All governors of provinces replied to the secret circular on this subject, saying there would be great obstacles put in the way of such a measure by the nobility, which

would result in a general uprising. Let this also be left for Alexander to settle. I bequeath to him the doubtful gratitude of the serfs and the sure hatred of the nobility. Wilt thou understand, Alexander, how to hold the reins of government with a firm hand, which I, thy father, the northern colossus, often found it difficult to do?

"Why should Alexander be the oldest, and not Constantine? The latter has my firm will, while the former listens to the counsels of others, and often permits himself even to be led. A Tsar must think and act independently. He needs no counselors, but servants only."

The Tsar became thoughtful again, and his forehead grew darker and darker. He thought of Constantine's opposition. He well knew his proud character, and that he looked with longing eyes on the crown which was the inheritance of his older brother. He knew that Constantine had attached to himself a large faction among the people and in the army. Many had even insisted that he, and not Alexander, was the rightful successor to the throne, since the latter was born when Nicholas was not even heir apparent, while the former was born when the brow of Nicholas wore the imperial crown. He knew all this, and he feared that the brothers would contest their claims in a bloody war. He knew the yielding disposition of his older son, ready for all sacrifices, and he was afraid.

Nicholas began the Eastern war in the hope to give the crown of Constantinople to his second son, and thus satisfy his ambition. But the allied powers crossed his plans and destroyed them, and the pride

and vanity of his second son again threatened the fate of the first. The Emperor was so occupied with his thoughts that he did not observe a young woman enter the room, who approached him lightly and affectionately kissed his hand. Nicholas, so unexpectedly aroused, started, but recognizing the new arrival, his brow lighted up, and he asked her caressingly:

"Is that thou, Masha? Thou art late to-day."

"Papa, I was writing a letter to my husband. He will sincerely regret being obliged to be absent from his father on this day."

This young woman was the wife of the Tsarévich, and the favorite of Nicholas. The Tsar was at first opposed to the alliance with the Princess of Darmstadt, but despite her youth, she soon knew how to establish for herself a firm position in the Russian court. The Emperor soon learned to appreciate her rare mental qualities and the goodness of her heart, which was an inexhaustible source of love and self-sacrifice. In spite of the intrigues of the courtiers, who sowed discontent between the Emperor and his oldest son, almost completely separating the latter from the affairs of State, Nicholas felt an irresistible attraction to his daughter-in-law, and often counseled with her. Imperceptibly she succeeded in overcoming the influence of the proud and vain Duchess Elena Petróvna.

"Papa," said the Tsarévna in an insinuating voice, "why have you such a sombre look; why such dark thoughts? Be happy. Is not this a day set apart for the merriment of all?"

"Masha, there are moments when sad thoughts will steal into one's mind involuntarily. At times I think that I am celebrating my name's day together with you for the last time. Thy mother—"

"I have just left the Empress. She is feeling much better, and would like to see you."

"Thou hast been to see the Empress? Has it occurred to thee that perhaps before a year's time thou wilt be the real Empress, and that the present Empress will only retain an empty title?"

"Papa, you frighten me; do not speak so!" exclaimed the Tsarévna, throwing herself upon the Emperor's breast and endeavoring to hide her tears. "Papa, dear papa, for the love of God, do not say such things."

"Why, Masha, dost thou not wish to become Empress? Is it disagreeable to thee to be first and above all?"

"No, papa, no! I wish to be your daughter and nothing more."

The Tsar pressed her to his heart.

"Well, perhaps thou art not ambitious, but thy husband is of a different disposition. He finds that his father has been living far too long, and that it is time that he ascend the throne. Is he not already thirty-seven years old? I well know that one who has the prospect of a brilliant inheritance, especially if it happens to be the crown of a Tsar, becomes impatient."

"Papa, bad papa," replied the Tsarévna, in tears. "Are you not ashamed to talk that way, especially to-day, the day of your patron saint? You well know that Alexander is the best and noblest of men,

both as a husband and as a son. He is ever ready to lay down his life for you. You know that he loves you better than myself or his children, and can you think that he wishes your death?"

"But even if I do not die, thou knowest that England's purpose is to compel me to abdicate, when—"

"Then Alexander would not accept it. A son accepts only what his father gives him of his own free will, and never would accept the crown from your enemies."

"If Alexander should refuse, then Constantine would not hesitate to accept," said Nicholas, directing a searching glance upon his daughter-in-law.

"The Grand Duke Constantine is also your son, and will act as Alexander would act," replied the Tsarévna in a firm and positive tone.

"Masha, thou art an excellent woman and a good daughter," said Nicholas, kissing her on the forehead.

"Let us go to the Empress." He then added in a whisper, "My poor Alexandra is yet Empress!"

CHAPTER XI

SAVELYÉV CALLS ON DOSTOYÉVSKY*

Savelyév left the room, passed through the street, which was illuminated with lanterns in honor of the day, and went in the direction of Sergievsky street. There he stopped before a two-story frame house, the shutters of which were all closed, not permitting the smallest ray of light to penetrate. In the house reigned a deep silence.

"Is it possible that they are already asleep?" he thought, and knocked on the gate, first softly, and then louder and louder.

At last heavy steps were heard and a thick voice asked:

"Who knocks there at this time of night?"

"Is *Gospodín* Dostoyévsky at home?" asked Savelyév.

"We do not know any Dostoyévsky," came in the same thick voice. "Go on."

"I tell you that Dostoyévsky does live here. Only last week I called on him here; I must see him—"

"Thou, friend, must be drunk. Go along and look for thy Dostoyévsky wherever it please thee, but let me go to sleep."

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*A noted Russian fiction writer.

Just then Savelyév observed that one of the shutters was being partly opened, and it even appeared to him that he could see an eye looking at him searchingly.

The voice which had just been heard by Savelyév hoarsely drawled out a song in which the words "the slave is alert" were distinctly heard.

"By day and by night," quietly responded Savelyév.

Scarcely had he pronounced these words when the gate squeaked on its hinges, and a strong arm pulled him into the yard. A voice whispered: "Walk in, quick!" and the postern was immediately shut after him.

"Who is that?" he was asked in a whisper.

"Savelyév," replied the newly arrived.

"Come in, brother. I did not recognize thee. This is the eighth day since we met. I am obliged to hide; they are looking for me. Enter, I have much to tell thee, and thou hast very likely something of interest to tell me, else thou wouldst not have come at so late an hour. Give me thy hand; I'll lead thee."

This was Dostoyévsky himself. He took the soldier by the arm and led him up a dark stairway into a small, lighted room without windows. At the table sat a young woman before an open book, which she was apparently reading. Savelyév shivered involuntarily at seeing her, and she turned pale and threw at him an imploring glance.

This was the same woman whom he had met at the fortune teller's. Dostoyévsky did not notice

either the paleness of the young woman or the excitement of Savelyév.

"Come, brother; here we can talk undisturbed. My wife will prepare us some grog; it is cold outside, and my friend will not refuse a warm drink."

The young woman closed the book, got up, and went out in silence. Savelyév followed her with his eyes.

"Then this young woman is Dostoyévsky's wife," he thought. "But why did she go to the fortune teller? Why did Marfúsha give her the ring?"

"I did not come to disturb thee for no purpose," he said to Dostoyévsky. "Thou knowest that I care not for grog; I came about an important affair."

"I well know that thou dost not drink, but I had to send my wife away so that she would not hear us talk about our affairs. It would be death to her if she found out that I am implicated in matters which are a menace to my freedom, and possibly to my life. She knows nothing about our society, and must not know anything. She is a weak woman; her anxiety and love for me might lead to dangerous results."

"But thou hast just told me that thou art in hiding; that they are searching for thee," remarked Savelyév. "Thy wife knows that?"

"Yes," replied Dostoyévsky, "but she does not know the real cause; she thinks it is on account of my writings. We have been seen, brother; or, rather, I have been seen. That is why I have not attended our meetings during the last eight days; I observed that I am being shadowed. Dark figures are watching my house from a distance, and I am being fol-

lowed. They will not leave me in peace until they have discovered my companions. That is why I keep at a distance from the brothers. Let them rack me in Orlóv's torture chamber; let them tear me to pieces, I shall not betray you; they will learn nothing through me. Transmit this to the brethren; let them be careful, for if Orlóv should scent our undertaking he will find enough spies to unearth everything. But hush; my wife is coming. She is an excellent and noble woman, but she loves me too much," he added with a strange expression.

Savelyév looked at him questioningly, but said nothing, for she entered with the grog.

They began to talk of other matters, but Savelyév was on needles. He constantly turned around nervously. He wanted to ask something, but could not make up his mind.

Dostoyévsky at last noticed his excitement. He drank his glass at once, and turning to his wife said: "Dearest, prepare me another glassful; I must go out and would like to get warm before going in the cold."

"How; dost thou still intend to go out? Why, thou knowest—"

"Yes, dearest, I am going; it is imperative. But don't worry. The night is so very dark that there is absolutely no danger."

The young woman left the room leisurely. With the instinct peculiar to women, she guessed that they were hiding a secret from her, and that her husband was resorting to subterfuge to cause her to leave the room; she was also afraid that the soldier might betray her secret visit to the fortune teller in her

absence. As soon as she had gone out, Savelyév asked:

"Where is Natásha?"

"It was because I knew that thou wished to learn something about her that I made my wife leave the room. Natásha has gone away."

"Gone!" repeated Savelyév, affrighted.

"Yes," answered Dostoyévsky with a sigh. "I could not keep and protect her here, as I promised thee. If thou couldst only know how jealous my wife is! It was this jealousy that I hinted at when I remarked that my wife loves me too much. But I shall take thee to her; she cried much about thee."

"How; dost thou intend to go out? Are they not searching for thee?" asked Savelyév.

"Yes, I am going to lead thee to her," replied Dostoyévsky. "I do not think there is danger now; it is late, dark, and cold. There has been no light in this house since three o'clock in the afternoon, and I take it that the spying gentry will prefer to keep warm in some saloon instead of watching for me in vain. It is true, if they should have seen thee enter here there would be danger. However, this danger is unavoidable; for if they saw thee enter they would wait until thou hadst come out again. As regards myself, I shall risk being arrested, for it must come to that in the end, and what difference does it make whether it happens a day sooner or later?"

"Why dost thou not flee, if thou knowest that thou art discovered?"

"Flee?" said Dostoyévsky, smiling sadly. "It is easy to say it. But how can we leave? We are destitute, with scarcely enough to buy our daily

bread, and to flee to another land one must have money. Besides, it is a great distance to the frontier, and there are more than one hundred thousand troops stationed on the way. How are we, then, to reach the frontier? Why, we should be caught ten times over. There is only one way, and that is to reach the enemy through Finland or go by boat over the Neva, but that would be treason. No, no! Hush, my wife is coming."

Dostoyévsky endeavored to talk of other matters, but the conversation dragged, and he felt that his wife was watching him. He quickly drank the grog and turned to Savelyév.

"It is time to go."

"Misha, dost thou, indeed, intend to go?" asked his wife, emphasizing every word.

"Of course, dearest, I must."

"But—" she objected.

Dostoyévsky did not permit her to finish; he kissed her tenderly, and said:

"Good-by, dearest; I shall be back soon. Get supper ready; I shall be hungry."

The wife made no reply.

The two men opened the door noiselessly and walked into the street. Looking around on all sides, they first went to the Tavríchesky Garden; then, becoming satisfied that they were not followed, they returned to Sergievsky street. Passing his own house, he did not even glance at it for fear of being observed. But had he looked he would have noticed that the gate was not closed, and that a woman quickly hid herself behind it on their approach. They had not gone fifty feet from the house when a

woman emerged from it, and followed them at some distance, endeavoring to keep close to the houses so as not to be observed.

They talked on their way, but so low that the woman who followed could not make out what they said. They avoided the large lighted streets, choosing, wherever possible, narrow and dark alleys. At last they stopped on the Obúkhovsky Prospect before a large house, which had the appearance of a barracks. After some reflection, they entered it. Wine and spirits were sold there, and consumed on the premises.

The woman was puzzled to know what she should do. To follow them into the saloon was not to be thought of, and to remain on the street, lighted as it was with lanterns and tallow-dips, was also impossible, without running the risk of being recognized. She crossed over to the other side of the street, and paced up and down, without losing sight of the entrance to the saloon.

We will leave the wife pacing the sidewalk, and follow the two reformers.

They walked in without attracting the particular attention of any one.

"We must buy a drink," said Dostoyévsky.

Savelyév shrugged his shoulders.

"It is necessary for appearance sake, so that we may leave by the back door."

"Very well," answered Savelyév impatiently, "but let us make haste."

"Two glasses of *tmina*," ordered Dostoyévsky, throwing a *grívenik* (ten-kopek silver coin) on the

table. The waiter poured out two glasses. Emptying their glasses, they went out through the back door into the court. Dostoyévsky, who was obviously quite familiar with the place, took Savelyév by the arm and led him through the dark court and up a dark stairway. A faint light was shimmering through a small window on the third floor.

Dostoyévsky knocked lightly, upon which there was heard immediately, "Who is there?"

Savelyév shuddered and pressed Dostoyévsky's hand—he recognized the voice of Natásha.

The door was opened and Natásha appeared before them, but she did not recognize him in the darkness. How she had changed in the last two weeks! Her round, full face had grown thin, and a sickly sallowness had taken the place of the fresh red color. Around her sky-blue eyes appeared bluish circles; the cheerful smile, which distinguished her even in moments of trouble, was displaced by a sad and hopeless expression. She stood before her friend like a marble statue of despair.

"Who is there, Natásha?" came in a weak voice from the adjoining room, which was followed by an interminable cough, showing what efforts these few words cost the speaker.

"It is I, Dostoyévsky, Prince."

"Ask him to come in," was heard in the same voice, "I have been expecting him a long time."

Dostoyévsky drew his friend into the reception-room. Just then Natásha raised her eyes, and a deathly pallor covered her thin face. She recognized Dostoyévsky's companion.

"Natásha," he said, taking her hand, "I brought you a friend. Do you not recognize him?"

Unable to restrain her emotion, Natásha threw herself on Savelyév's neck and burst in a flood of tears.

Without having spoken a word about love, they had unconsciously realized that they loved one another, and had concluded an eternal and inviolable union. Loving hearts do not require words; they understand each other. A dumb look to them is often more eloquent than the strongest speech.

Dostoyévsky left them and entered the room whence the coughing proceeded.

A man of advanced age lay on the bed. His features, once handsome and still retaining the mark of nobility, had grown sallow and transparent. The eyes shone with a bright luster. The thin hands impatiently tugged at the cover, now on one side, then on the other.

Dostoyévsky looked at him and saw that death had claimed him for its own.

The invalid made a superhuman effort to extend his hand to his visitor.

"I thank you for coming," said the old man in a faint voice. "I feared that I might not see you again, and I must talk to you before I die."

"Prince, banish these dark thoughts. You will get well, and God will permit you to live a long time yet," Dostoyévsky said, fully realizing that he was telling an untruth.

"No, I already feel the approach of death; it awaits me impatiently," answered the invalid. "My moments are counted. Yes; I shall die soon. But

where is Natásha? I do not see her. Natásha! Natásha!" called the invalid in a scarcely audible voice.

"Natásha, remain where you are," called Dostoyévsky through the door. "Let her be; I brought her a friend about whom she cried and pined so much," he continued, turning to the sick man.

The invalid was Prince Kurdyubékov. He was a scion of one of the oldest and wealthiest families of the Caucasus. Like his kinsmen, Chavzavádse, Sharvashídze, and Bagrátion, he entered the army service and became one of the most dashing officers of the Guards. He was captivated by Makárov's sister, whom he married. From the day of the wedding his bright days disappeared. The worthy sister of Makárov did not marry him for love, but for his position, and particularly on account of his great wealth. The Prince loved his spouse with all the fire and jealousy of the Eastern people, but his wife was far from reciprocating his feelings. Recklessly she gave herself over to sensual pleasures, and the whole town talked of her innumerable piquant escapades.

The deceived husband once surprised her in the embrace of one of her lovers, and struck at him with his dagger. The guilty wife was not in the least perturbed thereby; but, on the contrary, used the incident very cleverly to her advantage. With the aid of Count Pánin, with whom she was on intimate relations, she charged her husband with being insane and had him placed in a home for the feeble-minded. The Prince remained long years in this frightful institution in the midst of insane people.

In the meantime his wife was delivered of a son, the offspring of one of her lovers, but recognized by law as the son of the Prince.

Ten years since Dostoyévsky visited the insane asylum in the capacity of an author, where he became acquainted with the unfortunate Prince and learned his sad story from his own lips. Dostoyévsky worked untiringly until he succeeded in liberating him, which was, after all, not so hard to accomplish, since the Princess had in the meantime died, and the son had been twice exiled to the Caucasus for breaches of discipline.

The liberated Prince became once more master of his estates, which were, however, badly crippled by the profligacy of the deceased Princess and her son. What little remained of his former wealth was for the Prince an inexhaustible source for the performance of good deeds. His tastes and habits were very modest. A residence of thirteen years in an insane asylum had a sad influence upon him, leaving him morose and soured. His face lighted up only when he succeeded in accomplishing some charitable or generous act. Most people thought him penurious, because he was satisfied with the simplest fare, wore old and threadbare clothes and patched shoes; but the poor and needy called him their protecting angel—happiness and plenty returned to the homes which the Prince visited.

Two weeks ago Dostoyévsky looked in at Kurdyubékov's house and found him in bed without any one to see after him. He then brought Natásha there, whom he could keep no longer at his own house, thanks to his wife's jealousy. The Prince

liked Natásha from the first day. He asked the poor girl minutely as to the cause of her tears, about her past, who she was, and where she came from. Learning that she was the cast-off daughter of Makárov, his brother-in-law, he became more attached to her. When she cried, he endeavored to cheer her up, but in vain. She pined for Savelyév, whom she loved secretly and feared that he did not share her feelings.

"Natásha, why have our paths crossed?" said the soldier. "I am not in a position to make thee happy."

"Thy presence alone makes me happy," replied Natásha.

"Hast thou not heard what I am?" continued Savelyév.

"What difference does it make what thou art? I love thee," answered Natásha in the chaste innocence of true love.

"Reflect; they may send me back to Siberia any moment."

"Well, what if they do? People live there as they do here. I shall go with thee; I would be happy anywhere with thee."

"Dearest Natásha, my dove," said Savelyév, and kissed her on the forehead.

"Well, brother, it is time we were going," came in the voice of Dostoyévsky from the adjoining room.

"Already?" exclaimed the lovers.

"Yes," replied Dostoyévsky, putting away a paper into his pocket. "We must stop at Odoyévsky's to place the paper in his keeping, where it will be safe."

"Another minute," asked both lovers at once.

Dostoyévsky, moved, caught the hands of the lovers, and pressed them firmly.

"Poor children, the meeting was a short one. I regret to be obliged to separate you again. It would indeed be well if Savelyév could remain with the old man, for he has not long to live, but unfortunately it is impossible. The paper which I have in my pocket has just been handed to me by the Prince, and I must place it in safe hands. The fate of many poor and unfortunate ones depends on it. I cannot go alone, for I may be arrested and then the papers would be lost forever. Savelyév is in less danger than I am, and I shall thus be able to give it to him to hand to the Prince in case anything should happen to me. My children, this parting is not for a long time. To-morrow morning you will meet again."

"I will return in the morning, Natásha," said Savelyév, pressing the girl to his heart.

"To-morrow morning," sighed Natásha hopefully.

"My friend, you will come in the morning, at any rate," was heard in the faint voice of Kurdyubékov.

"Of course, God permitting, I shall come," answered Dostoyévsky.

They descended the stairway, passed through the court, and reached the street through the saloon.

The figure which followed them from Dostoyévsky's house was still standing on the sidewalk of the opposite side of the Obukhóvsky Prospect, intently watching the door of the saloon.

CHAPTER XII

THE MURDER OF PRINCE KURDYUBÉKOV

Natásha returned to the sick man, and bent over his bed. The sad expression of her face had changed to a happy smile.

"This is well, Natásha," said the Prince; "I am glad to see thee happy and radiant before I die," and he pressed her hand with his thin and bony fingers. "I wish that the night would pass quickly," he added. Natásha shared this wish completely.

"Thou seest, Natásha," he continued, "I feel death hovering over me, and in a few more days I will be caught in its bony hands—"

"Prince, do not speak so. You frighten me."

"Do not call me Prince, but call me uncle, for art thou not a niece to my dead wife?" At the word "wife" he was seized with a coughing spasm. Quieting down, he continued: "Yes, my wife's niece. As hard as it is for me to utter that word, she was nevertheless my wife before God and man. I forgive her all the evil she brought me. She has already been judged by the Allhighest, before whom I, also, shall soon stand. Call me uncle, then. It is a comfort to have a relative at the side of one's death-bed."

"Uncle, you will live; you will get well."

"No, Natásha, I shall die. I feel that I have strength enough to battle with death for several days, but I shall die before morning. An inexplicable presentiment tells me that."

Natásha shuddered, bent over the bed, and tried to cheer him.

"What is that? I hear footsteps," said the invalid, closing his eyes for a few moments.

Natásha raised her eyes and became paralyzed with fear at the sight of three suspicious-looking men who entered the room unobserved through the door, which she had forgotten to close and bolt.

"Who is there?" asked the invalid.

"Dost thou not recognize me, *bátyushka* (little father)," was heard in a thick and jeering voice. "I trust that it is no breach for a son to visit his sick father."

"My son?—I have no son," exclaimed the old man, in a frightened voice.

"Indeed? My dear father appears to be still out of his mind, and yet he had plenty of time to be cured. I always said that he was incurably crazy."

"We did not come here to talk, but to attend to business," chimed in another voice. "Thou, my dove, get out!" These words were directed to Natásha, and a rough hand pulled her away from the bed.

"I like to look in the face of those I talk to." This voice belonged to Petróvich, with whom the reader was made acquainted in the wine cellar.

"What do you want?" moaned the old man. "Have you come to rob me?"

"What a fancy to use such expressions. It is quite evident that thou hast not been out of the 'yellow house' very long," said the old cutthroat. "We have heard that thou art generous, and came in the hope to profit thereby."

"Natásha, give these men all that I have here," moaned the old man. "Open all the boxes; thou hast the keys. Give them everything and let them go."

Natásha did not respond; she had lost consciousness.

"We will find thy generous gifts ourselves; but to our business."

"Yes; let us go at our business," repeated young Kurdyubékov. "Thou hast likely thought of robbing thy son of his inheritance. But thou wilt have to think again."

"What more dost thou want, thou outcast?"

"I want thy signature to this will, for which purpose I have brought these two honorable witnesses."

"A will? For thy benefit?" exclaimed the old Prince.

"And something also for my benefit," came in the voice of one who had just arrived. "Some trifle for thy dear nephew."

At the sound of this voice Natásha recovered from her fainting spell and looked steadily and fearfully at the speaker.

"Ah! My runaway bondswoman is also here," exclaimed Makárov. With these words he dealt her a blow that sent her to the floor with the blood gushing out of her mouth and nose.

The first three villains, in the assurance that Makárov was still under arrest, had framed the will themselves, and had come to compel the old Prince to sign it. The villains looked around in astonishment. The old cutthroat Petróvich grabbed Makárov's hand and pressed it with such force that the blood spurted from the fingernails.

"So, thou hast come to spy on us. Very well; I advise thee, however, to leave this girl in peace. Have I not told thee that she is to be mine."

"Have I not a right to my own bondswoman?"

"Thou knowest very well that thou hast no more serfs. Thy estate has been confiscated and thyself driven from thy former home. Hast thou forgotten it, worthy companion? But enough of this; we have business."

In the meantime young Kurdyubékov shoved a pen into the old man's hand and ordered him to sign the will.

"Never!" hissed the Prince, with the energy of a dying man.

"We will see whether or not thou wilt sign," said Sherwood, and struck him with his fist in the face.

"Have pity on the old man! You can see that he has only a few hours to live," begged Natásha, placing herself before the Prince.

"Silence, girl!" screamed young Kurdyubékov, dragging her away by the hair. Then seizing the dying man's hand in his own, he moved it against the Prince's will over the paper, as teachers do with children in teaching them to write.

"Ready!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

"The old man will talk," remarked the careful Sherwood.

"We will take care of that," said Petróvich, and pulled out the pillow from under the old man's head and put it on his face.

Natásha suddenly rose up, all covered with blood, put her head out of the window, and screamed:

"Police! Murder! Robbers!"

She was immediately seized by her hair and jerked away from the window so violently that she fell again in a swoon. This was the work of Petróvich.

"We must stop the mouth of this accursed screamer," he said.

"Thou, Sherwood, press the pillow on the old man's face, while we search the room. By that time he will undoubtedly be dead."

"But—" observed Sherwood.

"What? Do not fear that we may cheat thee of thy part. Don't be uneasy; we are cutthroats and not swindlers. That is why I do not trust that villain Kurdyubékov," he added.

Sherwood held the pillow firmly to the old man's face and strangled him gradually. While he was thus engaged, he carefully followed the actions of his two accomplices, who were engaged in rummaging the chests and drawers.

"Little or almost nothing," murmured Kurdyubékov, looking in vain for some valuable papers.

"The old wretch has fooled us," echoed Petróvich.

Makárov had stepped aside, without losing his companions out of his sight. Improving a moment when they were deep in their search, he threw the

unconscious form of Natásha on his back and disappeared.

"Petróvich!" called Sherwood.

"What is the matter?" asked Petróvich.

"He has taken her and escaped!" answered Sherwood.

Petróvich turned around and saw that Makárov and Natásha had disappeared. Like an infuriated lion he rushed to the stairway and down to the street, but in vain; Natásha and her captor were out of sight. With his cat-like eyes he looked into every nook of the court, listened to the slightest rustle—there was not the least trace of them. "He must have stopped somewhere on the stairway," reflected the rogue, and taking off his boots he stealthily ascended the steps. Reaching the landing of the third floor, he stepped before the open door of Kurdyubékov's room, where his companions were still busy—one emptying boxes and the other holding the pillow over the face of the dead Prince. He whistled lightly, without leaving his post of observation.

Sherwood looked around when Petróvich motioned to him with his hand. Sherwood approached him.

"He must be dead now. He must have the lives of two cats if he has not expired by this time. Remain here, and do not let Makárov escape, while I go up into the garret. He must have secreted himself there. Do not let the other one go, either; I am afraid that he will rob us."

Sherwood watched the landing, and Petróvich quietly crawled into the garret, but the closed door barred his way; he heard heavy breathing behind the

door. He put his hand in his pocket, took out a skeleton key, with which he never parted, and opened the door.

In the garret reigned deep darkness. Some one, carrying what appeared to be a bag on his back, glided by him. Petróvich grabbed him with his powerful arm.

"Eh, eh! They do not dance that way in the Ukrayna!" exclaimed the robber, and tore away from Makárov's arms the senseless girl.

"Let her alone, Petróvich!" exclaimed Makárov, grinding his teeth.

Petróvich pushed him away like a child. "I told thee once that she belongs to me!" he screamed.

"And I tell thee that she belongs to me; thou must give her up!"

"Be careful!" thundered Petróvich, again brushing Makárov aside.

A knife glittered in the hand of the latter, and the blow, although well aimed, shattered the knife on the wide Circassian belt which Petróvich had on.

In place of an answer, the robber dealt Makárov a blow with his fist, which made him spin like a top down the stairway.

"That will do you!" hissed the robber, and went to Sherwood.

"Are we through with our work here?" asked Petróvich.

"All the boxes were emptied," replied Sherwood.

"Dearest Prince, let us now go to Trofímich's place to settle up our accounts," said Petróvich. But first of all, hand me the will and your pocketbook.

Among friends there ought to be mutual confidence, you know."

"However—" began the Prince.

But the robber did not let him finish, and regardless of his burden, he put his hand into the Prince's pocket and took from it the will and pocketbook. The Prince dared not make any objections, as Petróvich was feared as a man of unusual strength.

They went out, accompanied by Makárov, who gritted his teeth and threatened with his fist behind Petróvich's back, saying:

"Nevertheless, thou shalt not have her; thou shalt not keep her!"

The old robber overheard these threats, and he turned to Sherwood and Kurdyubékov: "Take Makárov with you to Trofímich's; he is entitled to a small share. I will soon be with you."

"And the will and pocketbook?" cried Kurdyubékov.

"The will is absolutely useless to me, but I shall keep it as a pledge. As to the pocketbook, I have told you once before that I am a robber and not a pickpocket. I shall first hide this little dove and then I will come.

Petróvich hailed an *isvóschik,* and drove off.

Makárov would have followed him, but his companions would not permit.

The trio went in the direction of the wine cellar on the Syénnaya Plóschad.

Suddenly, the woman who had waited on the sidewalk all this time, stepped up to them and, in a supplicating voice, asked:

"For God's sake, tell me, is he still there?"

"Who?" Kurdyubékov asked impatiently.

"My husband. Have pity on a poor woman. Tell me who the woman is with whom he keeps company. Probably the same one whom he once brought to our house, saying that she was an unfortunate creature whom he must protect. Unfortunate one! It was his loved one," wailed the woman, bursting in tears.

This was Dostoyévsky's wife. Tortured by jealousy, she had followed her husband and lost him.

"Dear woman, we do not follow the affaires d'amour of thy husband; we have business of our own," said Sherwood.

They disappeared in the wine cellar.

PART SECOND

PART SECOND

CHAPTER I

THE COUNTESS BOBRINSKY

"Your grace, His Majesty the Emperor," announced the footman.

The Countess Bobrinsky was reclining on a couch, reading the last novel by Paul-de-Kock. She laid down the book leisurely, raised herself, straightened out the heavy folds in her gray-green dress, and received the Emperor with a profound bow, reminding one of the stately minuet of Louis XIV. Nicholas kissed her hand, scarcely touching it with his lips, then offered her his arm and ceremoniously led her to a seat.

At one time the Countess was very pretty. The fame of her former beauty was not confined to St. Petersburg—she had a European reputation. Her youth had been a stormy one. Under the preceding reign she rivaled the celebrated beauty Narishkína, whose husband was appointed by Alexander I., in a moment of beneficence, *"ober-yegermeister."* "I gave him big horns that he may live on friendly terms with the deer," the Emperor was said to have remarked.

Alexander I. often had such fancies. Once, for example, he appointed Bakúnin commandant of the court, remarking: "I wish to have strict economy observed in my household; I am being robbed here exactly as if I were on the highway. Bakúnin is the very man for the place. He is such a fool that he does not know enough to steal, although it does not require much sense to do it."

After innumerable more or less reckless love affairs, the Countess turned her attention to piety and beneficence. She strove to attain a position in St. Petersburg similar to that occupied by Princess Liven at Paris. But conditions are quite different in the two capitals, and she was therefore obliged to combine the rôle of a political intriguant with that of a principal spy. The last rôle was in perfect accord with her character, and she lent herself to it *con amore.*

Her piety and beneficence were only the tools of her trade. Her best friend and confidant was the clever confessor of Nicholas, the *protopresviter* (archpriest) Bazhánov. This orthodox churchman, though he belonged to the party which constantly aroused the Emperor against the Tsarévich and inspired distrust in him toward his son, knew how to retain an influence over Alexander II. The entire party was completely in the hands of the Countess. The Count himself, owing to many risky speculations, was always in debt, and more than once did he escape imprisonment only on account of his exalted station. Constantly in need of material assistance from the administration, he became a

blind slave of the powerful Tsar's favorite, Count Kleinmichel.

"What is new?" asked the Emperor, after some trivial conversation.

"Your Majesty," answered the Countess, producing something out of her pocket, "here is a letter from Lord Sydney Herbert."

The Emperor ran over the letter, written in English, and frowned.

"Is that which Voronzóv's nephew writes you really true?"

"Your Majesty knows that his position became unbearable, owing to his relationship, which, however, may become very useful to us. He is an English minister and the nephew of a Russian field-marshal."

"Yes, this kinship might indeed be useful to us if the prince was not too old to undertake an active part in politics. And Aberdeen—will he have to leave?"

"Your Majesty, my friend the Princess Liven writes me to this effect: In England the war party is in the majority. Lord John Russell is in constant communication with Herzen."

The Emperor's eyes sparkled with fire. "This wretch Herzen dares to expand himself into an important person; he dares to banter me—"

"Golóvin also went to England, and joined the anti-Russian party."

The Emperor shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. "Golóvin is a traitor from vanity, but Herzen is a traitor by conviction."

"They say that His Highness, the heir apparent—" the Countess hesitated, as if afraid to proceed.

"Well, what is said about Alexander?" curtly asked the Emperor.

"Your Majesty, it is said; I, I—"

"Speak, Countess, what is said of my son?"

"It is said that Herzen is in uninterrupted correspondence with him."

"How; my son?" said the Emperor, looking at the Countess threateningly. "It is not true. It is impossible."

The intriguer endured his glance.

"I, myself, Your Majesty, would not believe it for a long time. Unfortunately now—" She stopped again.

"Proceed!" exclaimed the Tsar.

"Unfortunately I am convinced now."

"Impossible, I repeat, impossible! This is a despicable calumny. Have a care, Countess! Though your husband and myself have the same grandmother,* it does not give you the right to accuse my son of being in collusion with my enemies."

"Your Majesty forgets that I did not say that His Highness writes to Herzen, but that Herzen writes to His Highness, and I repeat this statement."

She got up, opened a small desk, took from a secret drawer a letter, and handed it to the Emperor.

"Your Majesty will please observe that the letter is unsealed. Fortunately this letter was handed for delivery to a person who is faithful to me, and thus

*Count Bobrinsky was the son of Catherine II. by Potemkin.

fell into my hands. I was going to Your Majesty with it, but Your Majesty has forestalled me in coming."

The Emperor unfolded the letter feverishly, and read its contents, raising his voice only in a few places like the following:

"Your Highness, you are called to heal the wounds inflicted by your father * * * Never by servitude, but by freedom will Russia reach her might and power * * * The war, which now waters the Russian frontiers with blood, is a good lesson, though paid for at a dear price. It shows how weak a nation is to whom freedom is unknown. * * * The power of a Tsar does not consist in fear, but in love. * * * When Your Highness ascends the throne of all the Russias * * * "

The Emperor read no more. He tore the letter into pieces and hurled them into the blazing open fire.

"No, Alexander, thou art not yet Emperor! I am still ruler. Herzen writes thee as if thou wert already on the steps of the throne. He forgets that I can strangle thee with my foot; can order thee shot from the fortress rampart. And yet Alexander is my son," the Emperor said after some reflection. "He is my son. But was not Alexis the son of Peter; still he crushed him like a reptile when he dared to rebel against him."*

*Alexis, the son of Peter the Great by his divorced wife, Eudoxia Lapoukhine, was a center of the conspiracy against his father's reforms. In the year 1718 a tribunal, composed of the highest officials of the State, condemned him to death, after he had twice suffered the knout. Divers traditions exist as to the manner of his death, but all that is certain is that on the

The Tsar rose from his seat, paced up and down the room, murmuring broken phrases:

"It is hardly possible that Alexander would rise against me. Opinions are often misleading. Perhaps he is not in communication with my enemies. It is more probable that they seek to make a weapon of him. I cannot believe that my son could be on the side of rebels and traitors. He shall not know that I have seen this letter, but I shall watch him carefully, and if what Kleinmichel and many others have told me prove true, I will show him that the spirit of Peter the Great abides in me."

At last he stopped before the Countess and said: "Countess, let no one—do you hear, no one, whoever it be—know of this letter. For the keeping of the secret you shall be held responsible."

"Your Majesty—"

"Very well, I repeat, no one is to know of this letter. Who gave it to you?"

"Your Majesty will recollect the mysterious disappearance of the *pristav* of the Viborg district last November."

"Well, what of that?"

"He has turned up."

"How? Whence?"

"The English had captured and taken him off."

"The English had captured him? What a story! Where could they have captured him?"

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morning of the fatal day the Tsar compelled his son to appear before a commission of nine of the greatest men of the State. About what then took place these nine men were forever silent; but it seems now clear that, in order to wring fresh confessions from the Tsarévich, the knout was again applied to him, and that he died from the consequences of the torture.

"Here, in St. Petersburg. They evidently had nothing against him or the few soldiers that were with him, but were looking for a more important personage. They probably took him for a dignitary, thanks to his embroidered collar, and took him with them. Judging from his tale, they endeavored to worm out of him our political secrets."

The Emperor's face assumed a dark and threatening look.

"Indeed! And so my foes slip into my capital and capture my people. It seems that I am not safe even in my palace. But how is it that I have not learned of the return of the *pristav* until now?"

"The English, perceiving that he was not the dignitary for whom they took him, released him at one of the Baltic ports, handing him a letter for the Tsarévich. The soldiers were sent to England as war prisoners."

"But this does not explain why the return of the *pristav* was not reported to me, or why he gave you the letter to be transmitted to the addressee."

"The *pristav* came to me, because he knows me, and had served me. He came to me because he feared, and not without sufficient cause, that Your Majesty might learn of his having been captured. He gave me the letter to send it to its destination because His Highness is out of the city. It has not been an hour since he left me."

The Emperor took his cap and directed his steps to the door, the knob of which was already in his hand, when, as if recollecting something, he turned about and said:

"I thank you, Countess, for the letter and for the information. Let that remain a secret. *Do svidaniya.*"

The Emperor withdrew, thoughtful.

The Countess remained several minutes. An ironical expression flitted over her lips, and she murmured: "Aha, Your Imperial Highness was pleased to call me an old intriguer. But what will you say now? Fate has been kind to me," she added, rubbing her hands.

"What do you want, Zefirína?" she said, turning to the French maid who had just entered.

"His excellency the Count asks permission to attend your grace."

"Ask him to enter."

"What does he want of me?" thought the Countess.

The Count entered, ceremoniously approached his wife, and kissed her hand.

"What is it, Alexéy? It must be something important. You know that I have no time to talk to you in the morning."

"Countess, I have just received a letter from Moscow. Your brother—Countess, your brother died suddenly. His valet handed him a cup of tea, and when he returned he found the Count dead in his chair."

"Indeed? That means that we shall not have to pay him one hundred thousand a year any longer. Why did you not tell me this sooner; the Emperor would have been glad to know it; he could not endure my brother."

This was the only expression from the Countess at the news of her brother's death.

A soft bass voice was heard in the hall.

"Does her grace receive to-day?"

"Alexéy, I am engaged," said the Countess.

He understood her and kissed her hand gallantly.

The Archpriest Bazhánov entered her boudoir, put his *klúbok* (ball-shaped hat) on the table, and gave the Countess his blessing. After the customary greetings, the Countess seated herself on the couch and the priest sat down beside her.

His brown eyes expressed intelligence and cunning. He was of tall build and athletic proportions, with a full, round face, overgrown with a gray beard. Personally he never meddled in state affairs, but nevertheless had a great influence on the Emperor's policies. Foreign affairs he avoided, but interested himself zealously in church matters. He well knew that Nicholas hated the *Raskólniky* (dissenters from the orthodox faith), because they would not recognize him as the head of the church. In regard to his rivals, Bazhánov skilfully managed to keep them away from the Emperor. Inokénty, an able and liberal churchman, who made a great impression on the Emperor by his sermons, was sent off to Khersón. Filarét, who dreamt in secret of patriarchal honors, was forbidden to leave Moscow, where he was made metropolitan, under the pretense that he was opposed to marriages between close relatives, and especially to the union between the Grand Duchess Olga Nicholayévna and the Prince of Würtemburg. Another, Filarét, the metropolitan

of Kiev, was likewise removed from the Holy Synod under various pretexts and kept in Kiev. So that Bazhánov, although a simple *protopresviter,* together with the weakling Antony, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, centered in themselves all the spiritual power, and made religion not a consolation, but a tool for their monarch.

The Countess shed tears in good form, but soon dried her eyes.

The priest turned to her. "Countess, what has happened to you?"

"Oh, my brother; my poor brother!" sighed the Countess.

"What has happened to him? Has he been sent to the Caucasus for some of his doings?" asked Bazhánov.

"No, father; he died."

"Well, that cannot be helped," replied the priest. "We are all mortal. God gave, and God has taken away."

"Yes, but he died so suddenly; so unexpectedly; without the ministrations of the holy church," moaned the Countess.

"What does it matter? As far as I knew your brother," sharply retorted the priest, "he would not have sought the consolation of the church under any circumstances. Now that he is dead we shall pray for the repose of his soul. He has surely left you enough to pray for him."

"Ah, father, you know that I am ready to give my last penny for his soul. I shall erect a church to his memory."

"I trust that you are speaking seriously this time, for the churches you usually build never reach the foundation," remarked the priest unkindly. "But we will talk of this another time. I came about a much more important matter."

"An important matter!" repeated the Countess.

"Yes. The Emperor had a son by the actress Assénkova, whom you will probably recall. She died in the early forties."

"Yes; indeed?" eagerly asked the Countess. "I remember her very distinctly. I knew that the Emperor visited her frequently, but did not know that she had a son by him."

"Yes, she bore him a son. I know that to be a fact."

"Perhaps he told you that in confession," remarked the Countess, forgetting herself.

"It is not a question how I found it out," replied the priest, turning red up to the ears. "So he had a son, and the boy disappeared in a mysterious way. The mother of the actress kidnapped him for revenge. The Emperor accidentally found the mother of the actress and learned from her that the boy is still alive. But unfortunately the old woman died without telling the boy's name or where he may be found. I know that the Emperor wishes to find him—"

"Did he say so himself?" interrupted the Countess.

The priest turned red again, but made it appear that he did not hear the question, and continued:

"Yes, he wants to find his son. He would be very thankful for a clew. Perhaps by returning his

son to him, we would destroy Nelídova's influence over him."

The Countess became intensely interested, for she heartily hated the Emperor's favorite, who did not make any secret of her disgust toward the old intriguing Countess.

"Yes," she said, "but how—"

"I thought of you, Countess. You know that I cannot personally institute a search; you must help me. Think of the gratitude of the Emperor."

"Very well. What is his description?"

"That I do not know."

"Where and by whom was he brought up?"

"Neither do I know this."

"Where is he now?"

"It is said that he had been exiled to Siberia, but escaped."

"But, father, thousands escape from Siberia," observed the Countess. "How old is he?"

"He must be twenty-three or twenty-four years old. You will locate him, Countess, will you not?"

"You will acknowledge that your proposition is not an easy one."

"That is true, and for that reason I apply to you."

This remark flattered the Countess, and she turned over in her mind what she had learned from the priest, and said:

"I shall see what can be done."

"You will find him, Countess; I am quite confident of that."

Bazhánov remained several minutes longer, but their conversation was of no particular interest. Whenever the Countess began to speak of the Tsaré-

vich, the shrewd priest turned the conversation to another theme. Although he secretly worked for the Grand Duke Constantine, he was exceedingly cautious, having a care for his own future, particularly from the time the Emperor had revealed to him his secret in the confessional.

Bazhánov took his leave. The Countess rang three times, which was the signal for her maid.

Zefirína entered.

"What is your pleasure, your grace?"

"Summon Solomonída!" said the Countess.

Solomonída was the nurse of the family, and once the favorite of the Count. Many years had passed since she became the tool of the Countess and her chief spy.

The former nurse came in. The pair counseled together a long time, but despite her usual cleverness to locate missing people, Solomonída would not undertake the task alone, and it was agreed that Leyming should assist her.

Leyming, a converted Jew, about 60 years old, served the Count and Countess as a factor. In spite of his awkward and unshapely figure, he had rare skill in transforming himself. He understood, according to requirements, to appear tall or short, large or small. As an actor he was as charming as he was despicable as a man.

And so Leyming was intrusted with the secret. For some time he was silent and buried in thought. At last he appeared to have formed a plan of action, for his cunning, cat-like eyes sparkled; he seemed to have grown taller when he declared:

"I shall find him!"

CHAPTER II

SAVELYÉV'S VAIN SEARCH FOR NATÁSHA

The clock had just struck eight in the morning. Thick darkness hung over St. Petersburg. The capital had not yet rubbed its eyes from its sleep. Only here and there was a straggler to be seen on the streets. Business begins late in St. Petersburg in winter time.

A young soldier, with his arm in a sling, walked quickly through an almost deserted thoroughfare, striking against the passers-by as if he did not notice them.

"Ah, *slúzhba,* why such haste?" asked a *búdochnik* (sentry) of him on the corner of Sadováya street, offering him his snuff box.

The soldier paid no attention to him, and continued on his way.

The *búdochnik,* yawning, followed him with his eyes, and swinging his arm, said: "To the devil with thee!"

The proprietor of the saloon, where Dostoyévsky and Savelyév had stopped the night before, had just begun to open the shutters of his shop when the soldier approached and entered the place.

"Don't be in such a hurry, *slúzhba,*" called the proprietor. "Thy throat must be on fire this morning. That's the way; one has to drive out one

wedge with another. After drinking deeply at night, it is well to have a bracer in the morning. How can I serve thee?"

"A glass of *tmina*," said the soldier, which he drank quickly. Then he drank a second and a third, which he sipped slowly as if wishing to draw courage from it.

The soldier threw upon the bar a *poltínik* (half-ruble). Then he passed to the court through the back door. This was Savelyév. He was consumed with impatience to see Natásha again, whom he wished to tell all that was agitating his soul.

Although he had been there but once, the way to Natásha's room was so impressed on his memory that he would have found it blindfolded.

In great delight he ran up the stairs to the third floor, where he expected to find her. The door was closed. He knocked, but received no answer. He knocked again, but a deep silence reigned within. He opened the door; there was no one in the hall. He coughed, but no one asked, "Who is there?" Savelyév began to call "Natásha," first quietly, then louder and louder, but no response came. He then entered the adjoining room, where he was immediately startled by the great disorder everywhere apparent. Chairs and tables were thrown about in confusion, sideboards and closets wide open, the drawers pulled out, and boxes scattered. On the bed lay Prince Kurdyubékov with a pillow on his face.

"Natásha! Natásha!" shouted the soldier in a hollow voice. "What has happened here?"

Natásha answered not, and the dead man alone, from whose face he removed the pillow, looked at him with immovable glassy eyes.

Savelyév ran out of the room and rushed headlong into the saloon, where he told the proprietor what he had seen, and asked him about Natásha.

"How am I to know thy Natásha?" replied the saloonkeeper carelessly. What happens in the house is not my affair. Thou, brother, hadst better go on thy way, because if thou tellest about this to any one, and the police get wind of it, it will go hard with thee. For wast thou not the last one in the place, a fact to which I would have to testify? And who would state that thou wast not the murderer? So thou hadst better hold thy tongue; I advise thee for thy own good. I know nothing and do not wish to know anything of this affair."

With these last words the saloonkeeper almost pushed Savelyév out of the door.

Savelyév walked down the street like a drunken man, staggering from one side to the other. Grief and despair had affected his mind. Unconsciously he reached Nevsky Prospect. On approaching the Anichkin Bridge he stopped, braced himself on his elbows on the railing, and passed his hand across his forehead as if trying to collect his thoughts.

"Where must I go? What must I do?"

Should he go home to cry over his great grief? No, no; he must go to Dostoyévsky's, a secret voice seemed to suggest to him. Savelyév proceeded with quick steps along Nevsky Prospect in the direction of Znaménskaya (Flag) street, and stopped near the

house where Dostoyévsky lived. The gate was open. He ascended the steps and knocked. No answer. Had his thoughts not been entirely occupied with his consuming grief he would have heard weeping inside.

The soldier knocked again, but without better success. He tried the door, and finding it unlocked, opened it.

At the sound of his steps Dostoyévsky's wife, who stood at the window, turned around and, all in tears, advanced to meet him.

"What have you done with my husband?" she exclaimed, convulsively pressing his hand.

Savelyév looked at her in amazement. "Your husband? Has he not returned?"

"In the name of God; in the name of the Holy and Great Trinity, tell me where he is. I implore you, have pity on me!" The young woman sank on her knees.

"For the love of God, stand up!" replied the soldier, raising her. "Explain to me. Is your husband not at home?"

"Where is he?"

"Where is he? How am I to know?"

"I have not seen him from the time you and he left together to go to his mistress."

The soldier frowned.

"To his mistress?" he said in a sharp voice. "What are you saying?"

"Yes, to his loved one," she exclaimed desperately. "I have myself seen how you entered there together."

"You? Us?"

"Yes, I. I followed you and saw with my own eyes how you entered a house on the Obukhóvsky Prospect. That is where his sweetheart lives. I know it."

"Woman," said Savelyév in a loud but faltering voice, "do not express yourself in such language. Yes, we have been there, but Dostoyévsky's inamorata, if he has any, does not live there. An angel of purity and innocence, whom your words, spoken in blind jealousy, cannot insult—the girl to whom your husband gave shelter in his house to protect her from danger, and whom your insane jealousy drove away—she lived there, and is my fiancée. But tell me now where Dostoyévsky is. I must know."

Weeping bitter tears, the young woman listened in silence, but she appeared not to understand him.

Savelyév seized her hand and pressed it with all his strength. "Answer me, woman! For the sake of your husband himself, I must know where he is."

Little by little the young woman came to herself.

"Then she was not his loved one?" she sighed.

"No; Natásha never was his sweetheart. She is my bride before God and men," said Savelyév.

In spite of her grief, a spark of happiness lighted up her face.

"She is not his loved one," she repeated. "Thanks be to God for that! She is not his sweetheart, then he still loves me."

"I ask you again, woman, where your husband is?" repeated the soldier impatiently.

"Where? Yes; where my husband is? Where have you left him? Did you not go with him? I

followed you and waited near the house which you entered. I waited a long time, unmindful of the cold and without fear, almost up to daybreak. Returning here I found the door unlocked. The rooms were dark and empty. Since then I have been standing at the window awaiting his return. I have not taken my eyes off the street. But Misha has not come back. Tell me where he is? Where can he be now? You surely know."

"Is it possible that he has been arrested?" flashed through Savelyév's mind. "If so, it very likely happened before daylight." He had accompanied his friend to the young Prince Odeyévsky to hand him Kurdyubékov's will, and then walked with him to the corner of Sergievskaya street, and saw him enter his own house.

"I am going after him," he said aloud.

"Yes, go after him and tell him that his wife waits for him in agonizing impatience. Be magnanimous. Have compassion on a poor woman!" she said, pressing his hand in despair.

The soldier spoke a few cheering words and left her. Had he looked around on reaching the street he would have seen a gendarme enter the house which he had just left.

CHAPTER III

THE ARREST OF DOSTOYÉVSKY

The waves of the Neva, washing the walls of the Petropávlosvk Fortress, were chanting a grewsome song of exile and death to the prisoners within.

The fortress is not designed for the protection of the capital against a foreign foe; no brave garrison is stationed there; the gay songs of soldiers are never heard there—there are heard only the sighs of the wretched prisoners and the ill-boding clanging of chains. Out of this frightful prison there are but two roads—one into Siberia, the other to a disgraceful death.

Along the narrow corridors are stretched long rows of cells, many of them lower than the level of the Neva. These cells are closed by heavy iron doors, with little windows in them, through which the sentry watches the prisoners and hands them bread and nauseating *shchý* (soup). These doors are opened only when the prisoner is to appear before the tribunal, or when he is sentenced to leave his cell for the gallows or for Siberia.

The prisoners are not permitted to appear at the little windows at the sound of footsteps in the corridor, lest they might see newly arrived prisoners and exchange signals.

Dostoyévsky, in chains, between two soldiers, followed behind the keeper of the prison, who was armed with a large key.

"Here is No. 8," said the keeper. "Prisoner No. 8, enter!" he added.

As soon as a prisoner crosses the threshold of the Petropávlosvk Fortress, or the boundary of Siberia, he loses his name and becomes a number.

"Lasciate ogni speranza!" murmured Dostoyévsky, when the iron door was closed on him. He looked around his cell; there was a stool, a *kazemat* (straw sack), and nothing else. There were large undried blood stains on the sack.

"Jailer, jailer!" he called, frightened.

The jailer glanced carelessly through the little window and asked:

"What is the matter, *krikún* (yelper)?"

"There is blood on the mattress," was the answer.

"Indeed? It is very probable that I have not seen it," replied the jailer, yawning and scratching the nape of his neck. "That is probably the blood of that young Pole. He was flogged before the gendarmes came for him. The wretch would not confess anything. They used up two big bunches of rods!" And the jailer removed his face from the window.

"But the mattress is still wet!" screamed Dostoyévsky.

"That is nothing. There will be plenty of time for it to get dry before thou leavest here."

Dostoyévsky sat down on the stool and began to reflect over his situation. The night before, on

returning home, to his great surprise he did not find his wife. When he began to call her and lighted a candle to look for her, he beheld a gendarme sitting quietly on the bed and watching his movements.

Dostoyévsky shuddered, and the gendarme got up and said:

"At last you have come back. You have kept me waiting a long time. It is well that you are at least dressed. You will have to come with me."

"Where to?" asked Dostoyévsky.

"To the Prince Orlóv," quietly replied the gendarme.

"Where is my wife?" asked Dostoyévsky.

"This is a strange question. How am I to know where your wife is?" answered the gendarme.

"I cannot leave the house before finding my wife," declared Dostoyévsky, feeling a stinging pain. The absence of his wife puzzled him.

"For the love of God, wait a little while. Perhaps she will return soon."

"Wait? To what purpose? If she returns, she will be here, and if she does not return, she won't be here; that is all. Whether she returns or remains away will not alter the matter; at any rate, you will probably not see her again soon. Besides, you will thus escape a wretched scene both for yourself and for me. To be present at such partings is very trying. I have no time to wait; let us go," curtly concluded the gendarme.

Dostoyévsky followed him, in complete despair.

On reaching Orlóv's headquarters he was handed over to the sergeant on duty, who announced that he

would have to wait in the reception room until daylight. Dostoyévsky threw himself on a couch, but sleep did not come to bring him consolation in a brief forgetfulness. He looked into the immediate present without worrying about the fate which awaited him. On becoming one of the secret society, of which he was a prominent member, he realized, with his customary penetration, that he who dared to rise against the prevailing national tyranny dooms himself to destruction. The uncertainty regarding his wife's strange disappearance was his overmastering torture. Like a drowning man who catches at a straw, he saw a faint ray of light in the midst of this dark night in the hope that perhaps to-morrow the chief would have compassion on him and tell him where his wife was.

Morning came. The reception room was filling up with people. There were various spies, coming to make their daily reports. They filed, one by one, into the office of his highness, the Prince, from whence they emerged, some with radiant faces and others with their heads sunk, according to the way their reports had been received.

Minutes and hours passed, which seemed an age to Dostoyévsky. At last, at 11.30, his name was called by the sergeant on duty. He entered the Prince's cabinet.

The Prince was the terror of all Russia, but like his predecessor, Count Benkendorf, he knew how to carry out his disagreeable, and at times horrible, duty with official etiquette. He was like a cat which first fondles with its silken paw so as to sink its claws into its prey afterwards with greater delight.

The Prince was turning over the leaves of the report.

"*Gospodín* Dostoyévsky, a writer?" he asked.

Dostoyévsky bowed silently.

Orlóv continued to look through the report, interrupting his reading from time to time by interjecting a significant hm! hm! and attentively looking at the author. Then he would turn over the sheets backward, running over once more the parts he had already read, stop, and reflect, twirling his mustache and shaking his head.

Dostoyévsky, suppressing his breath, tremblingly followed the slightest movement of the terrible chief of the Third Section. In that moment he could have exclaimed with Hamlet: "To be or not to be?" His fate was now being decided; his whole future.

At last the Prince, having finished reading the report, looked carelessly at the prisoner for some minutes, drew from his pocket a gold snuff-box, with the Emperor's portrait on it, took a pinch of snuff, and said quietly, as if talking to himself:

"Well, what is to be done? *Gospodín* Dostoyévsky, it appears that you are a member of a secret society."

The accused was silent.

The Prince continued, without heeding his silence.

"Imprudent youth, how can you hope that such an affair could remain undiscovered? Tell me, what was the object of this society?"

"I do not understand about what your highness pleases to question me," replied Dostoyévsky.

"Ah, you do not know? You know it quite well. You writers are all idealists. But why deny it? Reflect whether any of your dreams have become realities."

"I repeat, your highness, that I do not know about what you please to talk."

"Ah, young man—for in spite of your thirty years, I may call you so, for I am more than twice that age; young man, you can only help yourself by being frank with me. I ought to forewarn you that your case is a very bad one. Reveal the purpose and intentions of your secret society and name its members; I advise you to do this for your own welfare."

"Your highness, not belonging to such a secret society, it is impossible for me to name its members."

"I am very sorry," said the Prince, and rang the bell.

The officer in waiting entered.

"*Gospodín* Dostoyévsky, trouble yourself to follow the officer."

Dostoyévsky went out.

They entered a room on the lower floor, from which a very pretty young woman, apparently a Pole, had just emerged. She was all in tears, and her eyes expressed an undying hatred, and, at the same time, shame.

The officer whispered a few words to the sergeant-gendarme stationed at the door.

Shall we describe the shameful scene? The author was flogged, whipped like a stubborn horse.

In one of the rooms of the headquarters of the chief of gendarmes there is a movable parquet. At a given signal a certain portion of the floor is removed and the victim sinks in up to his chest. In the lower section are stationed gendarmes with whips. If the victim is a man, he is stripped to the waist; if a woman, they raise her skirts, and the punishment is continued until a signal to stop is heard. In this way the gendarmes cannot see their victims and never learn the names of those whom they have flogged.

The shameful execution ended at last, and Dostoyévsky was once more conducted to Orlóv.

"Well, young man, have you thought over the matter?" the Prince asked.

Dostoyévsky's eyes flashed with fury; he clenched his fists.

"Prince," he said, grinding his teeth, "the Empress Catherine has abolished the torture chamber; is it possible that it was destined to the glorious reign of the Emperor Nicholas to re-establish it?"

The Prince shrugged his shoulders in silence.

"Do you really think that if I knew of the existence of a secret society I could be compelled to speak by the means of a shameful punishment?"

"However, there have been instances. You would be neither the first nor the last to make revelations. And so you will not disclose what the object of the society is, and who its members are?" asked the Prince once more.

"I repeat, Prince, that I know nothing of the one or the other."

"Very sorry, young man, to be obliged to send you to the fortress; such is the order of the Emperor."

"Into the fortress?"

"Yes, until such time when the tribunal shall have announced its decision touching you and your accomplices."

"I repeat once more that I have no accomplices."

"I can call off their names to you. Here they are," said the Prince, pointing to a list of names, "and to-day I shall know all the names which are not here."

Dostoyévsky was silent.

"Well, be it as you wish," said the Prince, and rang.

An officer entered. Orlóv handed him a paper in which were a few words.

"In chains?" asked the officer.

The Prince shrugged his shoulders, and said with a look of sympathy:

"Yes." Then, as if wishing to excuse himself before Dostoyévsky, he added: "I am compelled to proceed in this way, since you are unwilling to acknowledge anything. Such is the order of the Tsar, and I must obey him. *Do svidaniya.*"

Dostoyévsky was undecided for a few moments. Love and pride were uppermost in his heart. At last he decided:

"Prince, however offensive and humiliating, after what I have experienced, it may be to me to turn to you with a request."

The Prince shrugged his shoulders, as if saying: "This is thy own doing; I wash my hands."

"Yes, as degrading as it is to me, I must nevertheless turn to you with a request. I trust that you will not deny it to me. For, regardless of your fearful duties, you are human."

"What do you wish? Speak. I am ready to do everything in my power for you, but I would advise you to confess."

"Prince, when I was arrested last night I had just returned—"

"From your society, very likely," said Orlóv in an insinuating voice.

"I returned from a sick, dying friend," answered Dostoyévsky. "On entering my room I found it open and empty. My wife had gone out, without my knowing why and where. She is a good woman, who loves me with her whole soul; she loves me even too well. Prince, tell me, has she also been arrested?"

The Prince looked over the report.

"I have issued no order to that effect; and as far as I know, she has not been arrested," he answered.

"Prince," said Dostoyévsky, seizing Orlóv's hand, "I do not ask you to spare me, but if the uniform has not deprived you of all human feeling, I beg of you one favor. I shall undoubtedly be isolated from the world a long time."

"I suppose so," remarked Orlóv.

"Prince, would it not be permissible for me to learn where my wife is? Would you permit me to see her?"

"As regards your last request, I cannot grant it," replied Orlóv. "Concerning your wish to learn where your wife is, I promise you on my word that I will inform you to-day."

"Now, sergeant, take the gentleman to the place I ordered. Please excuse me, *Gospodín* Dostoyévsky, for being unable to spare you the chains. You have yourself to blame for it, since you refuse to confess."

"After thou hast delivered the gentleman to the commandant," ordered Orlóv, "go to his house and find out about the lady and inform him, but not a word to her where her husband is."

"How so?" interrupted Dostoyévsky, supplicatingly.

"This cannot be done. If you would confess these measures would be unnecessary, but in the manner—"

"Thou wilt report to me," he continued, turning to the sergeant. "I will attend to the rest."

"Young man, you shall hear about your wife this very day. Good-by; I hope that you will consider the matter and make a full revelation."

Dostoyévsky bowed and went out, accompanied by the sergeant.

Orlóv recalled the gendarme and said to him:

"Seal all papers which may be found and bring them to me."

"This, your highness, has already been done. The papers are in your office."

"Very well," said Orlóv. "Young man, you may rest easy in regard to your wife. Wait a minute—call the gendarme who brought the papers."

"Your highness, he is gone," said the sergeant.

Orlóv wrinkled his brow.

"Very well, carry out my instructions. Good-by, *Gospodín* Dostoyévsky. Let us hope that when you appear here again or when you stand before the tribunal, you will have arrived at a different decision, and will make a clean breast."

Dostoyévsky was taken out, and the Prince, following him with his eyes, murmured through his teeth:

"He seems to be unusually obstinate; no matter, worse ones have been tamed."

In the sentry room Dostoyévsky was put in chains, and, to avoid publicity, which the secret police fear more than anything else, he was taken to the fortress in a closed carriage.

There he found himself in a narrow cell, isolated from the outer world, perhaps forever. His thoughts strayed to his wife, with whom he had spent so many happy days, and some unhappy ones.

Suddenly he heard three measured knocks on the wall from the adjoining cell. These were followed by a series of knocks, now between long, and again at short intervals. This was a secret method of communication, but Dostoyévsky, not understanding these signals, could not answer them.

The sun was dropping down toward the horizon, lighting up the blood-stained straw sack with its fire-red rays. The jailer, as if forgetting his prisoner, who had not eaten since the preceding day, opened the little window and handed him a dish of cold *shchÿ*, a pound of bread, and a pitcher of water.

The long, brightening rays disappeared, and everything was again shrouded in darkness.

CHAPTER IV

THE REVIEW AND ITS INCIDENTS

Every one who has been in St. Petersburg has seen the Bolsháya Milliona (Great Million) street, which extends from the Winter Palace to Márskavo Polyá (Mars Field). Opposite the Preobrazhénsky barracks, which are situated along the Winter Palace, stood a magnificent four-story house. On the fourth floor lived the widow of General Yurkóvsky. Her history is not without interest.

General Yurkóvsky,* stationed with his garrison in Poland, met there a beautiful young woman, fell in love with her wonderful eyes, and married her, completely overlooking the fact that he had left a wife and a half dozen daughters on his estate in Russia. The Russian wife was not willing to share her husband with the Polish woman, and he was obliged to part with his second mate.

If Yurkóvsky had not been a major, and of a Hussar regiment besides, he would have hunted sables in Siberia, or been obliged to ponder several years in a monastery over the inconvenience of plural marriages. But, owing to his position, his conduct was regarded as the mere exuberance of a gallant Hussar. His first wife continued to live on the

*At that time he was only a major, commanding the Elizabethgrad Regiment of Hussars.

Sarátov estate, while he appeared to have forgotten his second wife, of whom he had grown tired in the meantime.

Widow No. 2 lived in a mysterious way. She found occupation in an activity which in Russia is honorable and profitable. She was a government spy.

"Who is there?" answered the widow to the rap of her maid.

"Your grace, it is—" She entered and whispered a few words in her mistress' ear.

"Tell her to come in," said the widow.

It was the Countess Bobrínsky. She was received with reverence, and answered in like manner. She knew the value of a courtesy.

"Your excellency," began the Countess after several meaningless phrases, "it appears that there is nothing new from England."

The widow knitted her brow and replied, laying stress on every word: "Aha, then you expect news from England?"

"As if you do not know it, Anunziata."

"Yes, yes; I had entirely forogtten. But the *pristav* of the Viborg district has returned?"

"I know that he has returned, but what of that?"

"Well, Anderson—"

"Anderson, the currier? What about him?"

"He is on the side of his fellow-countrymen, and serves them."

"But he serves us also at the same time. He is a shrewd fellow. He wants to earn money and he does it."

"Countess, I have discovered a secret."

"Aha, a secret?" echoed the Countess.

"Yes; the Emperor has a son."

The countess shuddered.

"The Emperor has a son? As far as I know, he has four sons."

"But I, Countess, do not speak of his sons—"

"Of whom, then, do you speak?" interrupted the Countess, exercising her diplomatic talents. "Why, you have just said that the Emperor has a son."

"Yes—"

"And I answered you that he had four sons."

"Yes, by his wife; but—"

"Who, dearest, would reproach a man for such sins? And so the Emperor has a son?"

"But do you know by whom?"

"Of course, I do not."

"By Assénkova!" exclaimed the general's widow triumphantly.

"By Assénkova?" slowly repeated the Countess. "Assénkova, who is she?"

"An actress," replied the widow impatiently.

"Assénkova?" again repeated the Countess, as if recalling something. "Assénkova, who might she be? I cannot recall such an actress on the stage."

"Not now; she was an actress about twenty years ago—"

"And you remember what took place twenty years ago?"

The widow turned red, and found no answer.

"And the son," continued the Countess, unmindful of the widow's silence, "where is he?"

"Where is he?" said the widow.

"Well, yes; where is the son?"

"Where? Should I tell you, Countess?"

"And why not?"

"Countess— How much would you pay for this secret?"

"First of all I must know whether your secret is not a fiction. Show me the son first—"

"Impossible."

"Impossible?" replied the Countess; "then good-by. My time is valuable, and I cannot waste it on inventions."

"Countess," exclaimed the widow, jumping from her seat, "I have not the proofs yet; we must wait—"

"Hm! We have not the proofs yet? Good-by, then, dear friend, adieu!"

"But, Countess," insisted the widow, "what will you give me if I find him?"

"How much? This secret is of so little importance that really—"

"Unimportant? No!"

"Well, I would give you two thousand rubles."

"Impossible, countess; I myself—"

"Well, let us say three thousand, since you yourself—"

"Impossible, I have promised Sher—" escaped the widow's tongue.

"Aha, Sherwood has a hand in this matter. Good-by."

The widow, frightened at having accidentally revealed her secret, exclaimed:

"No, no; it is not Sherwood; it is—"

"Very well. I will add two thousand more for you;" and she added in a semi-tone, "Five thousand."

The trading between the two women would have continued a long time if the Countess had not declared positively:

"Well, five thousand, dearest; this is my last word. Moreover, this matter is of small importance, and Sherwood would do the work for as many hundreds."

"Sherwood?" exclaimed the widow, frightened. "Have I not told you that Sherwood—"

"I believe it, my dear; I believe it. Well, you understand, five thousand rubles. I only offer you such a large amount because you have been useful to me more than once. Are you agreed? Yes or no."

The widow was obliged to agree. By her carelessness she had led the Countess on a clue, and she well knew that the experienced intriguer would understand how to take advantage of it.

The bargain was closed. The Countess left the widow Yurkóvsky in an ecstasy because she had accomplished her purpose. For, as a matter of fact, she had gone to the widow with the object of using her as a spy, and the latter had met her half way. There was already a clue, and the Countess, experienced as she was in matters of investigation, knew that the hounds she would send in pursuit would run the game to earth.

She at once proceeded to the *protopresviter* to inform him of her success.

A few lonely Bashkirs* were straggling along the streets of the city, eyeing the palaces which were laid out to the right and left. They belonged to the Cossack Regiment, which was assigned to the shores of the Baltic to protect it against the English.

The Bashkirs are of small, stubby stature, with swarthy faces and prominent cheek bones. From under their black, thinly outlined eyebrows sparkle sly and quick-seeing lynx eyes. Their horses, with their short, strong legs, short necks, small heads, and large hump on the nose, show their Asiatic origin. The Bashkirs have neither musicians nor buglers, but they gathered, nevertheless, from all ends of the city, on the square in front of the depot of the Moscow Railway, as if by a secret signal. Their officers are dressed just like the men in line. They wear long *khalaty* (mantles) bordered with lace and ornamented with epaulets.

The regiment was going to the Peterhof turnpike, where they were encamped on the square, before the triumphal arch.

A sledge, drawn by a raven-black, full-blooded trotter suddenly flitted by the lines of the soldiers, who greeted it with a loud hurrah. A tall officer was seated in the sledge. On passing through Bolóto, near the house formerly occupied by Marfúsha, he involuntarily glanced around at the tumble-down shack. The man in the sledge was the Emperor. His tall, straight figure had become slightly bent, and his thin hair had turned gray, to which change

*The *Bach-Kourtes* (shaven heads) or Bashkirs are of Finnish origin, no doubt of the Ugrian branch, but completely Tartarized. There are at present some 500,000 of them in Russia.

recent unfortunate events had contributed not a little; but the eyes had not lost their old accustomed fire.

A sledge rushed by like an arrow past the Tsar. It was evident that the passing coachman could not check his spirited horses. The Emperor's eyes flashed fire; he could not brook anyone's having better horses than himself. But his wrath immediately gave way to fright. The rushing sledge bolted against a post and was overturned. A young woman was thrown to the ground.

"Stop!" commanded the Emperor to his coachman. With his practiced hand the driver brought the trotter to a stand in an instant.

Nicholas alighted quickly, and went to the young lady's assistance.

She had already got up and was going toward her vehicle.

"You have not been hurt?" asked Nicholas, but suddenly he became silent. He recognized his favorite, Mademoiselle Nelídova, in the lady, and he frowned darkly.

"You—here?" he said in a tone foreboding a storm.

The lady raised her eyes and fell unconscious.

"A comedy!" murmured the Tsar through his teeth. But he could not leave the young woman on the snow. He lifted her like a child and placed her in the sledge.

"*Bolván* (blockhead)!" he turned to her driver, "art thou asleep? Begone at full trot! Dost hear!"

Nicholas again seated himself in his sledge, and continued to review the troops. Again his horse

was rushing by other vehicles, leaving them far behind. Suddenly the horse bolted to one side. The Emperor turned and looked around. On the snow lay a bleeding soldier, run over by his sledge.

Once more was heard "Stop!" and the sledge stopped.

The soldier held a revolver in his left hand; his right hand was in a sling, and on his face was a wide scar.

"What does this mean?" thought the Emperor, and looking around he perceived at his side a man who seemed to have sprung from the earth.

"Who art thou?" demanded the Emperor of the mysterious person.

"Your Majesty, I am a police agent on duty here," he replied, saluting in military fashion.

"What is thy duty here?"

"Your Majesty, I am under orders to follow Your Imperial Highness at a distance, in order—"

"Useless precautions," interrupted the monarch. "Convey this soldier to my apartments, dost hear? To my apartments, not to the station-house. Let Mandt (one of Nicholas' private physicians) examine him for possible injuries."

The Emperor pursued his way, muttering through his teeth, "This is an unlucky day."

A sledge with three officers, who had been drinking deeply, swept by him. They recognized the Emperor and shouted:

"Hurrah!"

Nicholas' face brightened. He imagined that he heard the echo of the whole people in the shout of the officers.

Despite the bitter cold of twenty-two degrees, the soldiers, thanks to *vodka,* and the officers, thanks to champagne, stood bravely in line and shouted such "hurrahs" as the Russians alone can shout.

"*Zdoróvo, rebyáta* (health, children)!" courtesied back the Emperor.

"We wish health to your Imperial Highness," answered a thousand voices.

The regiments were passing by him in review formation in the direction of the triumphal gates, when "Halt!" was heard, and the marching was instantly stopped, and the troops stood as firm and solid as if rooted in the earth.

"Children!" said the Emperor, turning to them, "you are going on a holy mission; perhaps many of you will lay down your lives for your faith and for your Emperor—"

"We are all ready to die for the orthodox Tsar," replied the soldiers, who had been instructed beforehand.

"*Spasíbo, rebyáta* (thank you, children)," continued the Emperor. "Yes, should you have to die, remember that you die for your mother Russia and for your orthodox Tsar."

"For your tyrant!" came in a voice from the crowd.

The soldiers and the crowd heard with horror and stood petrified.

Nicholas glanced around to the side where the voice was heard, and noticed several *muzhíks,* who, not knowing the custom, kept on their hats.

"Hats off!" warned the Emperor in a cutting voice.

Instantly all heads were bared.

"Who spoke?" he continued in a tone which resembled the growling of a lion ready to throw himself on his victim.

The crowd remained silent, but a woman emerged from it who threw herself upon the snow at the feet of the Tsar, saying:

"It was I!"

"Thou?" asked Nicholas in a dreadful and threatening tone.

"I!" repeated the young woman, raising herself and hysterically embracing the Emperor's knees.

"Stand back!" thundered the Emperor, turning to the police. Then he shook the woman off and said to her in a subdued voice:

"Who art thou?"

"I am the wife of Dostoyévsky. Where is my husband? If thou art indeed the Tsar and not the tyrant of Russia, tell me where my husband is."

The Emperor looked at her in an effort to recall something.

"Thy husband? Who is thy husband?"

"Dostoyévsky, I have said already, Emperor; Dostoyévsky."

The Emperor thought a moment.

"Ah, I remember now; Dostoyévsky, the idealist." Turning to the police he ordered, "Take her away!"

A gang of policemen rushed forward and seized the woman.

"Have pity," she screamed. "Have pity on my husband and upon me—"

The Emperor's face did not show the least emotion. The policemen dragged away their prisoner.

"Save him at least!" cried the miserable woman, wringing her hands.

The Emperor was about to turn away, when his eye fell on the opal ring on her finger. He looked at it intently, and his face turned pale. For a few moments he was undecided; at last he said:

"Let her be taken to the guardhouse of the Winter Palace, and there await my orders."

He again turned to the troops, blessed them, and more than once tears welled up in his eyes. He felt, or appeared to feel, like a father taking what might be a last leave from his children.

He followed the departing troops a long time with his eyes. When the last files had vanished from sight, he returned to his sledge and ordered the coachman to drive to the palace.

CHAPTER V

THE CELLAR ON YAMSKY STREET

Among the shambling wooden dwellings on Yamsky street, which are, for the most part, occupied by *isvóschiks,* rises a large stone house. Once this house looked proudly down on its neighbors. It was built by a wealthy *raskólnik* (dissenter from the orthodox faith) as a place of meeting for his co-religionists. It was well removed from the usual haunts of the police, who hated and prosecuted them. A great fire which swept this section of the city did not spare this building. The tongues of flame licked off the exterior decorations. The interior finishings were completely destroyed. The superstitious owner would have reckoned it among the greatest of sins to oppose "the will of God," as he called the fire. He contented himself with standing before the house, ikon in hand, believing this the only means of averting the misfortune. The fire-fighting apparatus he looked upon as the devil's invention. The house was not repaired, as the owner, together with many others of his sect, were exiled to the Caucasus. The unsightly ruins stood deserted, and looked like a huge phantom.

Only one part of the wreck was occupied—the cellar, where its former owner kept the material for the rites of his sect. The strong vaults had with-

stood the flames, but all the interior arrangements—pictures in rich frames set with precious stones, a costly carved altar, with gold and silver furniture, priestly vestments, etc.—all were stolen and carried off by the police, and there remained only the rugged, naked walls. The cellar was unoccupied and unused many years. Only recently some one had fixed a lock to the heavy oak door, and every evening a dark figure was seen to approach it; the rusty lock would grate, the door open, the unknown disappear behind it, and the sound of a rusty bolt would be heard from within.

There was no other opening from the cellar except the door, so that the light from the outside never penetrated into it. It was lighted with one dim candle only when its present owner was in. By this faint light a female figure could be discerned crouching in a remote corner and wringing her hands.

This was poor Natásha, whom the old villain Petróvich kept a prisoner there from the time he killed Prince Kurdyubékov.

He tried first to obtain her love by kindness. Failing in this, he promised her pearls, precious stones, velvet and silk dresses, etc., but all to no purpose. He then attempted force; but despair had given the poor girl spirit and strength to withstand him. He beat her mercilessly, dragged her by the hair, threatened her with death, and starved her whole days at a time—but without success.

To-day, infuriated at her resistance, he determined either to subdue or kill her. He had drank all day in the wine cellar already familiar to the reader. At

four o'clock, when it began to grow dark, Trofímich equipped him with several bottles of wine and *vodka,* and in the nearest restaurant Petróvich bought some edibles, hailed an *isvoschik,* and drove away.

Makárov was also in the wine cellar. He had been drinking heavily, and was seemingly snoring loudly and regularly, pretending to be asleep. When Petróvich went out, he rose, paid Trofímich his bill, made a sign to Továrov, and followed Petróvich.

Petróvich opened the door of the cellar where Natásha was imprisoned. The girl shuddered at the sound of the rusty hinges, but spoke not a word; she only crouched farther in the corner, covering her tearful face with her hands. She once attempted to escape while her jailer was opening the door, but he observed her and threw her back with such violence that she fell all in a heap on the bare stones.

An ill-boding fire shone in the villain's eyes this evening. He lighted the candle, put the bottles and food on the dirty floor, and called:

"Ay, girl; come and eat! Thou must surely be hungry. It is two days since thou hast eaten a morsel of food. Thou must now know that it is not well to baffle me."

Natásha did not move nor speak.

"Dost thou not hear me? Come, accursed girl! To-night we amuse ourselves. I have everything to make a man happy—a pretty girl and good wine. Be quick!"

Natásha did not stir.

Petróvich seized her, dragged her to the chair, and forced her to sit on his knee. He tried to kiss her, but Natásha tore herself loose from his clasp,

and pushed him with such force that he fell from the chair.

The villain rose. His eyes were bloodshot, and he approached the girl with a staggering step.

"That is how you behave! The better; I like resistance; it is more piquant than when a girl surrenders at once; but now enough of these tricks, else—"

Natásha looked at him threateningly, saying:

"Get away, vermin! Leave me, thou murderer of my benefactor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Petróvich. "If thou hadst said this any other time I would have taught thee better, but to-night I have nothing but love for thee. Come to my arms."

With unsteady steps he walked up to Natásha. She rushed to another corner, and he rushed after her. His passion had become more and more inflamed by her resistance. He caught the girl and again dragged her to the table. He offered her *vodka,* but she pushed away the glass, spilling its contents on the floor.

"Ha, ha! thou willst not drink, *golúbka?*" he jeered. "But thou must, for while I am in good humor we must drink together." With these words he forced her head backward and poured a drink of *vodka* into her mouth. Despite the girl's resistance, some of the liquor got to her throat, causing her to cough.

"Did it not taste good?" asked Petróvich. "I shall now drink out of the glass which has touched thy lips."

He filled a glassfull, and drank it down with a gulp. "Now we will see how nice it is to kiss these pretty lips."

He pressed his thick, sensuous mouth to the lips of the girl, who tried in vain to protect them with her hands.

"How sweet! Once more," he said.

But before he had time to kiss her again, she dealt him a blow on the face that sent him staggering, and she broke away. It was not possible to presuppose such strength in a girl. In his fall he toppled the table and knocked over the candle. The cellar was in complete darkness.

"So thou wouldst rather amuse thyself in the dark, girl," he muttered, and he crept toward her.

Natásha tried to reach the door, but her tormentor kept close by her.

"What? Thou wouldst escape from me?" he said in a tremulous voice—his rage had partly sobered him. "No, *golúbka;* thou dost not know Petróvich."

He pulled from a secret sheath a long, sharp knife. It was pitch dark, but Natásha instinctively felt the approaching knife thrust and tiptoed along the walls to the door, where she sought the latch. She already felt the hot breath of the assassin. The next moment she felt herself seized by his rough hands and pulled to him.

"Police! Help!" screamed the girl.

"No one will hear thee," laughed Petróvich.

"Help, help!" repeated the girl, tugging at the latch.

"Here is help for thee!" yelled the murderer furiously, and brought down the knife with a swing.

Just at this instant the door was opened and the knife plunged into the breast of a man; a stream of blood gushed out, and for a moment the assassin stood stupefied. His hand released its hold and Natásha slipped from his clutch.

CHAPTER VI

A BRACE OF SPIES

"He lives here," whispered Sherwood to himself, turning around the corner of Dyevyátaya Róta street. "Yes, here; I know it for a certainty."

At the gate of a gray house sat a bearded janitor, a Tartar from Kazan, lazily surveying the street.

"*Knyaz* (prince), does not a soldier live here?" asked Sherwood, taking off his cap.

"To the devil with him!" roughly answered the Tartar. "How am I to know whether or not soldiers live here? There live here at least half a hundred, not one only."

"A one-armed soldier," added Sherwood.

"And why should I know if the occupants of this house have one, two, or three arms?" answered the janitor. "There are in our house all kinds of rabble."

Sherwood perceived at once that the Tartar was on his guard. The widow Yurkóvsky had promised her detective one hundred rubles, a sum which he had not possessed for a long time. The old spy did not know that she was to receive five thousand rubles for his discovery, else his demands would not have been so modest.

With a sigh, Sherwood took from his pocket a silver ruble, turned it around in his hands for a time, and with a still deeper sigh he said:

"Prince, would you mind to take a drink of *vodka* with me?"

"I do not drink *vodka,* but would take a little balsam."

The Tartars do not drink *vodka,* observing Mohammed's injunction; but if it is called balsam, they do not refuse, since nothing is said about balsam in the Koran.

Let us have some balsam, then," said Sherwood. He did not like to pay for others, while he himself always drank at the expense of his friends whenever he had the opportunity.

The two started off, walking arm-in-arm, toward the saloon. They had just left the building when a man, gray-haired and with a strongly dyed mustache, and wrapped in a *shuba* (fur coat), approached the gate and rang the bell. His ring was, of course, not answered by the janitor. He rang again. Then he shrugged his shoulders and said to himself:

"Well, I will have to wait so as not to attract the attention of the neighbors." And, disregarding the eighteen degrees of cold, he proceeded to walk up and down before the house.

Suddenly a hired carriage flitted past him and stopped at the gate. The unknown in the fur coat secreted himself in a corner to see who would alight from the vehicle.

But his curiosity remained unsatisfied. No one left the carriage, but the driver crawled down from his box and rang the bell.

"Who can that be?" the watcher thought. "Is it possible that some one else received the same com-

mission that was given to me? I must find out." He walked up to the gate, making it appear that he was passing by it, and at the same time looked into the carriage. In it he saw a wrinkled old woman. Her face was familiar to him.

"Solomonída!" he exclaimed, approaching the carriage.

"Leyming!" came back in reply.

The two kindred spirits recognized each other. They were the principal spies of the Countess.

"By what chance, Solomonída, did you get here?" asked Leyming, and red blotches appeared on his cheeks, which was an indication of his angry feeling.

"Obviously by the same chances which brought you here," replied Solomonída.

"But the Countess—" retorted the other.

"Well, what of that? The Countess preferred to dispatch four eyes instead of two."

"But the Countess promised—"

"To give you five hundred rubles," interrupted Solomonída. "I know that, but I came to the conclusion that she can well afford to give me a like amount in a transaction which brings her ten or perhaps twenty times as much."

Old Leyming said nothing more. He had known the Countess many years. She always dispatched several spies to investigate the same affair; first, to obtain the most accurate information, and second, to be able, as a result, to pay a smaller reward by saying that she already had the information through another source. But he also knew that in this affair there was a large profit. He began to reflect how he could rid himself of the competition of this woman, when

he happened to see his old friend Sherwood arm-in-arm with the janitor Abdulka, coming across the street with unsteady steps.

"Ah, he also has a hand in this. Is he, too, sent by the Countess?" he asked himself.

As soon as Sherwood saw his rival, he went to speak to him. Sherwood and the janitor were both drunk—the whole ruble was spent for *vodka.* The old spy threw himself on Leyming's neck and wept.

"Brother, bosom friend, at last we meet again! Yes, Abdulka, if thou couldst only know my friend Leyming! There is a man for thee."

Then he whispered into Leyming's ear:

"Couldst not, bosom friend, lend me a ruble? I must have it, otherwise I shall cut my throat. Kinsman mine, give me a ruble."

Leyming easily observed that his friend was very drunk; besides, his presence there was not to his liking, so he gave him a *chyetverták* (quarter of a ruble), saying: "This is all I have with me; if it be of any use to thee—"

"That is all thou hast?" asked Sherwood playfully. "Oh, thou old jester!" and he kissed him again and pressed him to his heart. The saying, *"in vinum veritas,"* is not always true.

Leyming was on needles. What would he not give if only Solomonída and Sherwood were out of his way.

"Well, well," he said impatiently. "I have not time; I must go; I have business."

"Business? Art thou looking for one-armed soldiers?" said the drunken man.

Leyming and Solomonída sharpened their ears.

"The son of—" continued Sherwood, but Leyming pressed the hand of the gossipy spy with such force that it cracked.

"Silence!" he whispered in his ear in a threatening tone.

"Ah, yes, yes," muttered the other; "yes, I forgot that it—it is—a secret of the Emperor. One must be careful. But if I tell thee where he is, what willst thou give me?"

Leyming pressed his hand once more, saying:

"Silence, I tell thee to be still, fool!"

"Yes, where is he, this interesting youth? You sharp rascals do not know it, but Sherwood, the drunkard, does know. Sherwood is wise, but do not force him to kiss Solomonída, brr—. She is so old that the devil himself would refuse to kiss her, brr—. And so you wish to know where he is? He is here, my friend, in this house. The last descendant of the Kazan rulers, our worthy janitor and my brother, will bear me out in this. Is it not so, my heart's ease, Abdul-ben-Bahum?"

Leyming interrupted this chatter, secretly shoved a five-ruble piece in the janitor's hand, saying:

"Let us go, I wish to speak to you."

But it was not so easy to part him from Sherwood.

"Where shall I be, friend Leyming? Where am I to remain?"

Leyming stamped his foot impatiently, and walked off with the janitor into the interior of the court.

"Now take me to the one-armed soldier; I know that he lives in this house."

Abdul darted upon him his sly eyes. His drunken stupor had left him, for the wily Tartar scented profit.

"What one-armed soldier?" he muttered as if the balsam was still tangling his tongue. "I do not know any one-armed soldiers."

Leyming gave him another five-ruble bill.

"Perhaps this will refresh your memory."

The Tartar scratched his neck. Then he struck himself on the forehead and said hesitatingly:

"You are likely asking about the soldier who lives at Mme. Krakhmálina?"

"Yes, that is the one; take me there," Leyming answered.

The janitor walked ahead, followed by Leyming. They ascended to the fourth floor. The careful spy looked cautiously around to see that Sherwood was not on his tracks.

They rang Mme. Krakhmálina's door bell. An old woman, coughing, opened the door. But they had scarcely entered when Sherwood and Solomonída slipped through the gate behind them, unnoticed.

They entered the corridor at the moment when Mme. Krakhmálina was pointing to one of four beds in the room, and who said:

"Yes, he did live here. A tall young man, with a gash on his face. His box is here, but he has been absent for two days."

"Has he a box?" Leyming exclaimed. "Show it to us; we will open it."

The old woman remonstrated, but a five-ruble piece, slipped into her hand by Leyming, quieted her.

"Abdul, bring us a chisel," ordered the old woman. "But you will not find much. Savelyév is as bare as a falcon."

"Savelyév!" muttered Sherwood and Solomonída, who were secreted in the corridor and watched through a crack in the door.

After a careful survey of the lock, Abdul said: "A good nail will do the work. Here you are." In a moment the lock flew open and Leyming's eyes glistened with delight at the sight of the contents.

Leyming began eagerly to run over the letters which it contained, laying aside the most important ones, while the janitor and the landlady looked on with indifference. He folded the papers and was about to put them in his pocket, when a hand stopped him and a mocking voice cried into his ear:

"Stop! Divide, brother!"

Leyming shuddered and raised his head. Sherwood and Solomonída stood before him.

CHAPTER VII

DOSTOYÉVSKY'S WIFE BEFORE THE EMPEROR

Who gave thee this ring?" asked the Emperor of the young woman who stood before him in the same room in which we have seen him at the beginning of our story. The Tsar walked leisurely up and down the room with his arms crossed over his back.

The young woman was silent. Distress and fear about her husband blurred her memory. She put her hand to her forehead in an effort to recall something.

The Emperor fixed upon her a penetrating look, but his thoughts were far away from the suppliant who was on her knees before him.

The woman was completely unnerved; she could only murmur:

"Have mercy on him!"

"He will be spared, but first tell me who gave thee this ring."

The encouraging words restored her memory, and she answered:

"A fortune teller."

"A fortune teller?" he asked in a hoarse voice. "What was her name?"

The woman was silent and shuddered from fear.

"What was her name? Perhaps Marfúsha?"

"Yes, Marfúsha, Marfúsha," she cried.

"Thou hast known Marfúsha?"

"I have seen her but once. I swear by the living God that I saw her but once."

"Why did she give thee the ring?"

"Why?" thought the young woman, meditating. "Why did she?" she repeated to herself.

The Emperor kept silence, and he was trying to read with his eagle eyes the secrets of her heart.

"Why?" again repeated Dostoyévsky's wife. "Oh, yes; now I remember," and she removed her hands from her forehead. "She gave me the ring, conjuring me on my life and my salvation never to take it off. She told me—"

She stopped as if reflecting.

"Well, what did she say?" asked the Emperor.

"She—she said that the ring could not save my husband, but that it would avenge him."

"And if it could save thy husband, wouldst thou give it to me?"

"I, Emperor? Do not make sport of a wretched, loving woman. Is it possible that I can save my husband? Is it possible that he will be restored to me?"

"Art thou agreed to give me the ring? Say yes, and thy husband is saved."

Dostoyévsky's wife crawled on her knees to the Emperor and kissed his feet.

"You are not deceiving me? No, no; that would be too cruel. You will spare my husband, will you not?"

"I ask thee once more, dost thou wish to sell me the ring? The fortune teller told thee nothing else when she gave it thee?"

"No! I do not know this horrible woman. I had never seen her before that time. What else did she tell me? Yes, yes; she said that I would not be able to save my husband, but that I would avenge him. And now he will be returned to me. Did she lie, then?"

"Fortune tellers often lie; they always lie. How much dost thou want for the ring?"

The young woman tore it off her finger and laid it at the Emperor's feet.

"Shall I bargain about a ring, when it is a question of the life and freedom of my husband? I have not heard in vain that Your Majesty is a just and gracious Tsar."

Nicholas picked up the ring, looked it over from all sides, pressed the hidden spring and the stone flew back, revealing a hidden medallion.

"Well, what dost thou want for the ring?" he asked again.

The young woman wrung her hands in silence.

"Very well," said the Tsar, "thy husband is free. But he cannot remain in St. Petersburg." He then went to a writing table, wrote several lines, rose, and rang twice.

An officer entered.

"Conduct this lady to the fortress. Let her husband, prisoner No. 8, be set free."

The poor woman did not believe that her happiness was real. She kissed the Emperor's feet hysterically, and weeping from joy, she said:

"Is this really true, or is it a dream?"

"Go now, so that the dream may become a reality," said the Emperor with unusual emotion. "Go and set thy husband free." With these words he raised her up, and turning to the officer said:

"Help her, thou seest that she is weak."

The officer led the young woman out of the Emperor's presence.

Nicholas followed her with a sad look, and when the door was closed he soliloquized:

"I have at least succeeded in making her happy. Why can I not make them all happy? But my hours are numbered—yes, they are numbered. Nesselrode told me to-day that if I fail to accept the final decision by to-morrow, Esterhazy will be recalled by his court. Am I, then, to accept the four proposed conditions? Never! never! My decision is made."

The Emperor resumed his examination of the ring.

"Is this really the index finger of fate? Has fate actually confirmed her decision?" He unbuttoned his coat and fastened the ring to the gold cross which was suspended from his neck.

"I must put an end to this struggle," he continued, "otherwise it will break my power completely. The fatal choice between submitting to my foes and insisting on my own stipulations torments my soul at every new dispatch from the Crimea or Asia Minor. Sleep has left me, and I am pursued by the hideous and ever-present phantom of defeat."

Nicholas looked again to see if the ring was securely fastened to the chain, then buttoned his coat.

This ring was presented to the Princess Lovich, the wife of Grand Duke Constantine Pávlovich, when this proud and ambitious Polish lady stood almost on the steps of the Tsar's throne, by a Circassian woman, brought by General Grabe from the Caucasus.

"Take this ring," she had said to the Princess, with whom she was on a friendly footing; "there is poison under the stone, and of a kind that we of the Caucasus alone know how to prepare. Perhaps some day it will be convenient for thee to have it. Should thy husband's enemies triumph, or should he in a moment of temptation brush thee aside as many other women—thou art proud and wouldst not wish to outlive such disgrace."

From that time the Princess never parted with the ring.

After the death of Alexander I., when the troops, partly from ignorance and partly by persuasion, had sworn fealty to the Grand Duke Constantine and proclaimed him Emperor, he would not accept the dangerous honor. The Princess Lovich strove in every way to inspire her husband with ambition.

"Only a coward would refuse," she had said to him. "Show thyself to the troops, who have assembled in front of the Lozenky and are calling for thee with loud huzzas. Only show thyself to them, and the crown is thine! If thou art proclaimed Tsar in Warsaw and Petersburg, Nicholas will not dare to touch the crown, which of right belongs to thee. Be a man, and thou wilt be Emperor!"

Constantine vacillated. He had already taken several steps toward the door leading to the balcony, intending to show himself to the troops, when his younger brother, Michael, who had just arrived from St. Petersburg, entered. He succeeded in persuading Constantine to refuse the throne in favor of Nicholas.

When Constantine signed the act of abdication the Princess uttered a wild cry of despair, like that of a lioness on whom the door of the strong cage is shut for the first time. She pressed the opal to her lips, but Constantine observed the movement in time and snatched away the ring. After this occurrence the ring remained in his possession until the Poles drove him out of Lozenky, when he took one-half of its contents, and sent the ring with the remaining poison in it, along with some secret documents, to the Emperor at St. Petersburg. Nicholas wore the ring until Márya Assénkova, to whom he told the secret of its contents, took it from him, saying:

"It is not well for a monarch to keep poison. In a moment of weakness he may take it, forgetting that the welfare of his people depends upon him. Poison is the property of women who are weak, unprotected creatures, but not of men, who have strength and freedom of action!"

Márya Assénkova had no occasion to make use of poison; grief and despair had taken its place.

In this way, thanks to blind chance, Nicholas again became master of the ring.

"Let the will of Providence be fulfilled!" he said after the young woman had gone.

The *protopresviter*—Bazhánov—entered.

The careful priest looked around, as if afraid of something; then he approached the Emperor and said:

"Your Majesty, you were pleased to state in your confession—"

"Is this a church?" interrupted the Tsar.

"Your Majesty, we are alone, and wherever there is a priest a confession may take place. Your Majesty was pleased to speak of a son—"

The Emperor's face again assumed its usual composed look. He had thought that the confessor would speak of another secret, which he had also confided to him in confession. He therefore said in a more kindly voice:

"What have you learned about him? Have you found him?"

"We have a clue, but he has not yet been found."

The priest then handed the Tsar a bundle of letters, which, as we have seen, Leyming had abstracted from Savelyév's box.

The Emperor opened the package and began to run over the letters. At the name of Márya Assénkova his face showed some agitation. He continued to read, but the name of Savelyév attracted his attention.

"Who is this Savelyév?"

"Your Majesty, he is your son, whom the midwife kidnapped. It was under this name that he was placed in the Gátchina Orphan Home."

"Then why not go there and inquire what became of the boy, and where he is now?"

"Your Majesty, I have sent to Gátchina, but—"

"Well, what?"

"They only know there that Savelyév became a soldier, and that subsequently—"

The clergyman stopped short.

"Well, what then?"

"That he took a part in Petrashévsky's conspiracy, and was sent to Siberia."

The Emperor wrinkled his forehead.

"What, my son had a hand in a conspiracy against me?" exclaimed the Emperor.

"But, Your Majesty, he did not know then and does not know now that he is your son."

"True. But where is he? Where didst thou get these papers?"

The priest replied that he had intrusted the search to the Countess Bobrínsky, and that she had brought him the papers as the first result of her efforts; that she was perfectly confident that their owner would soon be found.

The Emperor paced the room for awhile, and then stopped in front of Bazhánov.

"Thou art a faithful servant, and I shall know how to thank thee. Find my son, but quickly."

"Your Majesty has confessed to me another secret, and a frightful one, which—"

Nicholas' face assumed a threatening look.

"Not a word about that!"

"Your Majesty," resumed the priest in a supplicating tone, "think of the responsibility you are taking. Think of the guilt one incurs who lays hands upon himself."

"Not another word; I command it. In the confessional thou art master, for thou speakest there in the name of God, but here I am Emperor."

Bazhánov was silent.

Nicholas again walked around the room as before, and again stopped before his confessor.

"Thou hast been a faithful servant to me and to my house. But who dares say my imaginations shall become realities; that my thoughts shall become facts? Go now. Thou hast brought me glad tidings, but thou wilt complete my joy by leading the son of Márya Assénkova into my arms."

"The Countess Bobrínsky—"

"Does she need money again? How much does she want?"

"Your Majesty, her husband needs money for a certain business venture—"

"Money, money, and money. How am I to get all that is needed by those who surround me? War is an expensive affair. I shall talk to the Countess myself. It is fortunate for her that Kenkrin is dead. He was always opposed to the business ventures of my nobles. Now go."

The priest took several steps in the direction of the door, when the Emperor called him back, saying:

"Bless me, father."

Bazhánov blessed the monarch, who reverently kissed his hand.

CHAPTER VIII

NICHOLAS BECOMES SERIOUSLY ILL

Mademoiselle Nelídova, the Emperor's favorite, sat brooding in her boudoir. Her look was directed toward the banks of the Fontanka, as if she was expecting some one. Whenever the tinkle of sleigh bells was heard, or the even steps of a trotter reached her ears, she would put her face to the icy window and anxiously peer out; but the sledges all went past. The hour at which the Tsar usually visited her had passed and he had not come.

Mademoiselle Nelídova had observed for several days that the Emperor was changed. During the last two days he had been more affectionate to her; the wrinkles on his forehead became smoother; he was more confiding and gracious than ever before; he stayed longer in her company; when he would take his leave, he seemed to do so reluctantly. The day before he had been unusually gracious. Five times he took his helmet to go, but each time he returned to her. When he went at last, his leave-taking was so affectionate that Mademoiselle Nelídova cried an hour after he had gone.

Where is he to-day? Why does he not come to share her grief and console her?

She recalled that there was a session of the imperial council. Perhaps the sitting was continued longer than usual. Perhaps new troops had arrived and he had to review them. "He will come. Yes, he will certainly come later. He will surely be here soon," she said to herself.

Twilight was approaching, but the favorite did not take her eyes from the glittering snow. Suddenly the snow crackled, and a single-span sledge stopped in front of the porte cochère, and a tall officer alighted.

It was impossible to recognize the visitor in the deepening twilight. But her heart suggested that it was he. She heard quick steps in the salon.

"It is he!" she ejaculated, and went to the door of her boudoir. The door was opened, and the tall officer entered.

"Your Majesty!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Nelídova, but her heart erred. Before her stood her kinsman, Count Kleinmichel.

"Is it you?" asked the favorite in a tremulous voice, and stepped back. The unexpected appearance of the minister dismayed her. She tottered to a chair.

"What has happened to the Emperor? Tell me what has happened to him?"

"Olympiáda Arkádyevna, you must be brave; a terrible blow has fallen upon us."

"Do not torture me. Tell me quickly what has happened."

The Emperor is ill, very ill; he may die."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the favorite. "It was but yesterday that he was in the best of health."

"Yes," he replied, "but disease has been gnawing his heart a long time like a poisonous reptile. Yesterday, while he was in the Semenovsky barracks, where the Siberian Cossacks are encamped, we begged him to take care of himself, and he answered:

"'I have business of greater importance than to look after my health.' And to-day I found him in bed. It is true that Mandt does not find anything alarming in his condition, but Karrel and Enokhin shake their heads significantly. Karrel has become a different man. That the danger is imminent is indicated by the general conduct toward me. Those who formerly crawled in the dirt at my feet, to whom a smile from me was the greatest reward, now turn away, and refuse to recognize me. Even Bazhánov turned his back, trying to make it appear that he did not see me, and he conversed with Rostóvtsev, my avowed enemy. I should like to crush him. By humiliating me, they hope to gain favor with the future Emperor. But Nicholas still lives; he may get well; then yon scoundrels will learn that Count Kleinmichel, like his monarch, never forgets or forgives."

Mademoiselle Nelídova did not hear the last words. She was absorbed in other thoughts.

"Olympiáda Arkádyevna, the death of the Emperor will ruin both of us. We must act."

"But what can I do? For God's love, do not speak of the Emperor's death. No, he cannot—he shall not die."

"I, too, hope that he will recover, to the sorrow of our enemies. But his death must not take us by surprise and leave us without protection."

The favorite looked at him in bewilderment. She did not understand, nor did she try to understand.

He thought to use her as a means to secure his own safety, as he had already used her to make his position secure.

"Does the Emperor love you?" he asked.

The word "love" penetrated her heart like a ray of hope.

"Does he love me?" she answered amidst tears. "Of course—I think—I hope that he loves me."

"If so, then you must see him."

"See him!" joyfully exclaimed the favorite, forgetting her grief for a moment. "Yes, I must see him. My carriage, quick." She was about to ring, but the Count arrested her hand.

"On my return I ordered the carriage for you; it will soon be ready. Which one of the ladies is to-day in waiting on the Empress?"

"Anna Abomelek."

"The Princess Abomelek reports that she is not well to-day, and asks you to take her place to-night; here is her letter. Take it and go to the Winter Palace."

"At once, at once!" exclaimed the favorite, and stretched her hand to the bell, but the Count stopped her again.

"Olympiáda Arkádyevna, pray listen to me. First of all you must dress; you know that the Empress is very strict in her notions of etiquette."

"That is true," muttered the favorite.

"You will take the place of the Princess Abomelek, and, under some pretext, as for instance informing yourself about the Emperor's health, you will go into the sick chamber.

"I shall certainly see him!" cried Mademoiselle Nelídova hopefully.

"Yes, you will see him; you must see him, and persuade him to receive me privately."

It was evident that the favorite did not understand him, for she said joyfully:

"I will see him. No; he will not die."

"Yes, you will see him, but do not forget that I must see him also, for it concerns our mutual interests."

"Yes, yes; he loves me," said the favorite. "He will not die. God will not permit it."

"I, too, hope so," said Kleinmichel. "I can depend on you, then, Olympiáda Arkádyevna. But I repeat, remember that I must talk with the Emperor. Dress yourself now; the carriage waits at the door."

CHAPTER IX

THE PHYSICIAN EXAMINES SAVELYÉV

The Emperor's private physician stood before the wounded soldier, after having examined him.

"Hm, hm," he murmured, "the wound is not a dangerous one. But where is the cause for the delirium? That is inexplicable."

The officer on watch approached him.

"The Emperor asks your excellency to please to come to him."

"Immediately," and the doctor took a pinch of snuff.

"Captain, what is this soldier's family name?"

"Savelyév."

"Ah, Savelyév, a simple name. Do you know any particulars about him?"

"No, I know nothing, except that the Emperor ordered that he be brought here and placed in your care."

The doctor took another pinch of snuff, then he turned to the officer:

"Captain, look at the soldier carefully. By the way, what is your name?"

"Felkersam," answered the officer.

"Yes, Felkersam, the name is familiar. Look closely at Savelyév; whom does he resemble, in your opinion?"

"He greatly resembles the—" The officer stopped short.

"Well, speak up plainly."

"There is a strong resemblance to—to His Majesty. Were it not for that scar across his face he would be taken for the Emperor."

The doctor stared fixedly on the officer.

"You are mistaken," he said. "There is not the least likeness between them. One must not judge so superficially."

The captain looked at him in amazement.

"Not the slightest resemblance," repeated the physician. And turning the snuff-box in his hand, he said: "The wound is not dangerous; a few cold compresses and it will heal. Because of the fever, it will be necessary to take him to the hospital. Adieu, captain, I am going to His Majesty."

The wounded soldier again became delirious, saying in a dull voice:

"Father! Am I indeed to be thy murderer? What has become of Natásha?"

CHAPTER X

AT THE EMPEROR'S SICK BED

While the doctor was slowly ascending the steps of the Winter Palace, the drum of the guardhouse was beating the tattoo.

On reaching the first floor he visited first the invalid Empress Alexándra Fedorówna.

"Doctor, my husband will surely recover, will he not? He is such a strong and healthy man; he will surely not go to the grave before me, who have been ill for twenty-five years."

The physician approached the Empress' bed, near which Mademoiselle Nelídova was seated, looking at the doctor questioningly.

"It is a slight attack of pneumonia," he said, "aggravated by rheumatism. His Majesty does not take sufficient care of himself; that is all. There is nothing dangerous."

The favorite's eyes beamed with delight, and the Empress pressed the doctor's hand with emotion.

"Doctor, you will save him; you are the only hope and comfort of our family," said the Empress.

"Pray do not be uneasy. To-morrow or the day after, not later, His Majesty will himself come to see you."

"Your Majesty," asked Mademoiselle Nelídova when the physician had left, "shall I go and bring you word of the Emperor's condition?"

"Wait until Doctor Mandt leaves him, my child. He is a German and is more skilled than the Russian physicians."

"And would you order me to go then?"

"Certainly, my child."

Slyéptzova, the other lady-in-waiting, looked at the favorite suspiciously.

The physician walked leisurely to the sick chamber. He was of the opinion that a doctor should never be in a hurry, for haste lessens his authority. The Emperor had just fallen into a doze when he entered.

Doctors Karrel and Enokhin were at the patient's head, thoughtfully watching his sombre face.

Doctor Mandt walked in noisily. Both physicians motioned to him to make less noise. He approached his colleagues and asked:

"How is he?"

"Poorly, very poorly," said Karrel. "Not one of the remedies take effect."

"Then we must try other remedies."

"Yes, but I fear—"

"What cause is there to fear? The Emperor was careless and caught cold."

"This also can become dangerous—"

"Danger is not to be thought of," was the self-conscious answer of the German physician.

"But we are only physicians and not gods," retorted Karrel. "I fear that his illness is more deeply seated."

"Well, what is it, worthy colleagues? State your opinion. *'Tres faciunt collegium.'* There are three of us; let us exchange opinions. And so you said—"

"I and my colleague fear—we are almost sure that the Emperor is poisoned."

Mandt raised his head quickly and threw a searching glance upon the Emperor. Then he took out his snuff-box and slowly sniffed a pinch. Reflecting a moment, he walked up to the Emperor and felt his pulse.

"One, two, three," he began to count the pulsations. "The pulse is regular." Then he placed his ear to the Emperor's lips, listening to his breathing. "He breathes regularly. What caused you to suspect poison?" he turned to his colleagues.

"The trouble lies in the very fact that there are no symptoms of illness, while his strength is visibly breaking down. Feel the pulse; you will find that it gradually grows weaker; he—"

"Well, you are simply alarmed because the patient happens to be an Emperor. His pulse is indeed weak, but you must consider that a man of sixty, and one who has lived a stormy life, has not as much blood as a youth of eighteen. I therefore consider the sick man's condition almost normal. Did the Emperor complain of any pain?"

"No," said Karrel, "and it is precisely this that disturbs me—the rapid weakening of his strength with complete consciousness. As regards myself, I fear the worst."

Mandt smiled condescendingly and shrugged his shoulders.

The Emperor sighed suddenly and awoke.

"Where is Mandt?" he asked.

"I am here, Your Majesty."

"How is the Empress?" asked the Emperor.

"Better. A nervous attack. It is harassing, but not dangerous," replied the doctor.

"Then she will outlive me. Poor woman!"

Mandt went up to the Emperor, took his hand, and began to feel his pulse again.

"Why should Your Majesty talk of who will survive him. You will both live a long time yet. Ha, ha, ha, I wish I would live as long as Your Majesty, though I am younger."

"Ah, thou thinkest that I will live for years," said the Emperor in a tone which did not astonish Mandt, but which congealed the blood in Karrel's veins.

Then, turning to Karrel, the Emperor said:

"Art thou of the same opinion?"

"Your Majesty—" articulated the faithful servant.

"Yes, I know what thou wouldst say. 'We are all mortal, Tsar and pauper alike.' Is not this what thou wouldst say? Thou wouldst also say that doctors are also subject to error. You three are the physicians of my perishable body, but where is the physician of my soul which must survive my body? Karrel, ought I not to see my confessor? Is it not true that we must at times doubt the words of a physician?"

Karrel was unable to answer; the tears checked him.

"Let Bazhánov be called, and thou, Mandt, go to the Empress. Thou sayest that she suffers from

nervousness; go then and strengthen her nerves. Fate has prepared a heavy trial for her in the near future and she will need all her strength."

"Your Majesty, why excite yourself with such gloomy thoughts? You have a long life before you yet."

"Hm!" said the Emperor. "Go to the Empress."

Mandt went out. On the stairway he met Bazhánov.

"How is the Emperor?" he asked of the doctor.

"An attack of pneumonia and hypochondria," replied Mandt.

"Is there any danger?"

"Not the slightest. It is well, father, that I met you. I have just examined a wounded soldier by the order of the Emperor."

"Well, what of that?" interrupted the confessor. "This is surely not the first time that you received such an order."

"Certainly not, but I discovered a resemblance."

The shrewd priest raised his head quickly, but habit had taught him to control his emotions. He did not wish it to appear that he surmised what the doctor wished to tell him.

"A likeness?" he asked in an indifferent tone.

"A striking likeness to His Majesty."

"Hm! it must be a trick of nature. Does not Prince Suvárov also strikingly resemble the Emperor?"

"Certainly," answered Mandt, and took snuff. He was too well accustomed to the ways of the court

to express his opinions frankly. "His Majesty has just sent for you, and I must go to the Empress."

The confessor followed him with his eyes until he entered the apartments of the Empress.

"And so the soldier resembles the Emperor," he said to himself. "I must see him. The Emperor will forgive me if I oblige him to wait a while. Besides, I have not been summoned yet, and Mandt says that the Emperor is not dangerously ill."

Bazhánov walked down the stairway and entered the guardhouse.

"Where is the soldier whom Privy Councilor Mandt has just examined?"

An officer pointed to the soldier, who lay on a cot. He was asleep and his chest heaved regularly.

One glance was enough for the priest to observe the unusual likeness to the Emperor.

"What is the soldier's name?" he asked of the officer.

"Savelyév."

"Savelyév?" repeated the priest. Then he added to himself: "I was not mistaken. That is the name of the soldier in whose room they found the papers which I gave to the Emperor."

"Captain, would you trouble yourself to leave me with this soldier alone? I have something to say to him."

The officer left with a reverence.

The priest went up to the soldier and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Savelyév!" he called loudly.

But he continued to breathe regularly and quietly.

"Savelyév!" he repeated, and jerked his right arm. The soldier cried from pain and opened his eyes.

"What is wanted of me?" he asked, but noticing the priest he reverently kissed his hand and asked his blessing.

The priest pronounced a benediction, and continued:

"Art thou Savelyév, the soldier?"

The soldier made an affirmative sign with his head.

"Hast thou been knocked down by the Emperor's horse?"

The soldier again affirmed with a nod of the head.

"Thou hadst at the time a revolver in thy hand."

"Yes," replied the soldier.

"What didst thou intend to do with it?"

"I wanted to kill the Emperor!"

"To kill the Emperor!" exclaimed Bazhánov, terrified.

"Yes, and then to kill myself," quietly added the soldier.

"Unfortunate one! And why this double murder? What induced thee to this?"

At this question the soldier sank to his knees, and his eyes were filled with tears.

"What I have not confided to any one, I will confide to thee, father. For art thou not a man of the church, and the source of comfort and mercy?"

Bazhánov raised him up and said:

"Sit up and make thy confession. Tell me all of thy past, that I may offer thee the comfort of the church."

The soldier narrated his sad story, beginning with the time he was placed in the Orphan Asylum; how he dreamed of making a career for himself; how, instead of this, he was sent to Siberia for sharing in Petrashévsky's ideal. He described his escape from Siberia; how he fought under the Russian flag, hoping in vain to wipe out his transgression with his blood; how his general tried to obtain pardon for him unsuccessfully; how his comrades, not wishing to send him back to Siberia as a criminal, made it possible for him to escape; how, instead of going over to the enemy, he preferred to walk hundreds of versts to reach St. Petersburg in the hope of obtaining a pardon. He mentioned also how he met and loved Natásha; how he found Kurdyubékov dead by the hands of an unknown murderer, and could never find the girl. He also told him of his accidental meeting with Marfúsha, who told him that she was his grandmother; that from the time he had lost Natásha he had looked for her day and night, and at last, in complete despair and almost deprived of reason, he decided to kill the man whom he considered the cause of all of his misery, and then end his own life. He refused to believe that the Emperor was his father. A father's heart would have recognized his son, even under a soldier's mantle.

The clergyman listened attentively to Savelyév's confession. He knew the advantages which would accrue to him if he could bring to the Emperor the son of his favorite, Márya Assénkova, whom he never ceased to mourn.

After Savelyév had finished his story the priest rose, and putting his hand on the soldier's shoulder, he said:

"Patience and humility, my son! Pray to God! Perhaps there is a bright future in store for thee, which will reward thee for all the trials of the past. But do not speak to any one of thy criminal intentions, nor what thou hast learned from the fortune teller."

"And Natásha?" asked the soldier. "Where is Natásha? The poor girl! where can she be?"

"Natásha will be found. But if thou tellest any one of thy former intentions, or of thy imaginary secret, it will be thy ruin and Natásha will be lost to thee forever."

The priest blessed him once more and then left him.

The soldier remained seated on the cot, with his head sunk, and absorbed in deep reflection.

Bazhánov ascended the stairs to the Emperor's apartments. In the reception room he found Karrel, who, apparently, was waiting for him.

"Father," said the doctor, "the Emperor is expecting you, but before you enter I must speak a few words with you."

"What do you wish to say?"

"The Emperor's illness—"

"Is not dangerous, I have been so told by Doctor Mandt a quarter of an hour ago," interrupted the priest.

"Ah, God grant that Mandt may not be mistaken. God grant that he speaks the truth. For my part I do not share in his hopes."

"Do you differ with him?" asked the priest excitedly.

"Before God and my conscience, I do."

"Is the Emperor really so alarmingly ill?"

"Yes, father; and he is convinced himself that he has but a short time to live."

"Doctor, you frighten me."

"I waited for you to tell you that which my conscience does not permit me to hide from you. You must prepare the Tsar's family for the blow which may overtake them very soon."

"But wherein does the Emperor's illness consist?"

"It is impossible for our science to discover the cause, the symptoms are so strange, so conflicting. But I am not alarmed without good reason."

"And what is the reason?"

"I am afraid that the Emperor is poisoned."

"After all!"

These words escaped the confessor's lips, and he would have given half of his life if he could have had them back. The doctor heard this significant remark, and regarded the priest with a fixed look.

At this moment an adjutant-general stepped out of the Emperor's chamber, and seeing the confessor he said to him:

"Father, the Emperor has asked for you several times. He awaits you with increasing impatience."

"I am coming at once," said the priest, and seizing the doctor's hands he said in an agitated voice: "I

shall do my duty, even more than is enjoined upon me, if possible. You understand me. What you have told me shall remain a secret between us."

Karrel bowed in silence.

The priest and the doctor then entered the sick chamber.

"Your Majesty, the confessor has come," announced Doctor Enokhin, who stood at the bedside.

"Very well; leave me now. I wish to commune with the physician of my soul."

Every one left the chamber, and Nicholas remained alone with the priest. What the Emperor said on this occasion has never been revealed.

When Bazhánov left the Emperor and entered the reception room his eyes were filled with tears. He approached Karrel, and whispered to him: "You were right, faithful Karrel. The Emperor is dangerously ill; I fear there is no hope for his recovery. Try the remedies which science teaches you, and I will pray that your efforts may be successful. But remember that nothing confirms your theory, and it must therefore remain a secret forever."

The priest then descended the stairs, directing his steps to the Empress' apartments. He encountered the favorite in the hall. A deathly pallor covered her face and she walked with tottering steps.

"Where are you going?" the priest asked of Mademoiselle Nelídova.

"The Empress was pleased to send me to the Emperor to inform myself about his condition."

"At the wish of the Emperor, I am going myself to the Empress. You cannot see His Majesty."

The favorite looked at the priest, but did not understand him, for she continued to walk in the direction of the Emperor's apartments. The priest then took hold of her arm and repeated:

"You cannot enter the Emperor's chamber."

Mademoiselle Nelídova was terrified, and said in a faltering voice:

"I cannot see the Emperor? I? Impossible!"

"Since His Majesty did not know of your presence in the palace, he instructed me to inform you that he does not wish to see you."

"It is not true! Do not be cruel. I know you are my enemy; you wish to remove me. It is not the Emperor, but you who do not wish me to see him. I must see him, if only for one minute!"

She was exhausted with this outburst of grief, but continued in the direction of the sick chamber. The priest held her back once more, and turning to the officer on duty, he said:

"Announce to His Majesty that Mademoiselle Nelídova prays an audience."

The officer entered the Emperor's chamber, but came out immediately.

"His Majesty cannot receive you now," he said courteously, offering her his arm, "and instructed me to conduct you to the Empress."

A ray of hope shimmered in the favorite's heart, but alas! only for a moment. On reaching the Empress' ante-chamber the officer got her cloak and put it on the shoulders of the startled woman.

"What does this mean?" she exclaimed.

"I did not wish to tell you in the presence of strangers," answered the officer politely. "His Majesty commanded me to conduct you home, and to forbid you—to request you—. You are asked not to come again to the Winter Palace."

"I must not—"

"Pardon me; this is a very unpleasant duty for me—the more so, owing to my deep respect for you. But His Majesty desires—you will understand. I do not like to use more unpleasant words. The Emperor does not wish that you should again cross the threshold of the palace. He says that family relations will not permit your presence here. I crave your pardon; I am only performing my duty."

Insulted in her love and defeated in her ambition, the favorite did not hear the officer's apologies; she fell in a swoon.

The officer picked her up like a child, carried her into her carriage, and conducted her home, where he handed her over to the chambermaid in an unconscious condition.

The priest followed her with his eyes until she disappeared through the palace gate, when he entered the presence of the Empress.

There he remained for a long time. After leaving the Empress he went to the guardhouse.

CHAPTER XI

NATÁSHA'S ESCAPE

The assassin Petróvich wiped away the blood which had squirted into his eyes.

"Ah, girl, thou wouldst run away from me? Wouldst slip out of my hands? Thou dost not know Petróvich. Now thou art properly punished."

He staggered to the table, struck a light, and looked for the candle. He found it, lighted it, and turned to the door. The body had fallen across the doorway, leaving it partly open. As soon as Petróvich neared the opening the cold wind struck his face.

"Where is the girl?" he muttered.

The faint, flickering light revealed, instead of the body of Natásha, that of a man weltering in blood. Blood streamed from his mouth and from a deep wound in his chest, covering the ground with a red pool.

"What is that?" exclaimed Petróvich. "Am I mistaken? What night bird is this?" He brought the candle close to the dying man's face.

"Makárov!" he cried. "All right, now thou hast found out, though a little too late, that it won't do to meddle in Petróvich's affairs. But where is the girl?" he screamed in a rage, and throwing away the candle rushed out in pursuit, regardless of the dying man.

He did not know what direction to take. He heard the sound of hasty steps. He raged like a lion balked in seizing its prey. Looking round, he saw at a distance the figure of a female form gliding over the snow like a black dot. He hastened his steps and gained rapidly on the fugitive. Ahead of the first figure he soon observed another figure running.

"Who can it be? What can it mean?" he reflected, and doubled his pace.

Suddenly an *isvoshchik,* driving at full speed, came from a side street. Petróvich had no time to escape, and bumped against the door of the vehicle. Two strong arms seized him from the carriage and held him securely.

"What is the meaning of this wild running?" was asked him.

The villain recognized the voice at once.

"Alexéy Alexándrovich, for God's sake let me go," he begged, for each minute of delay increased the distance between him and the girl.

"Ah, thou knowest me, friend!" retorted Alexéy Alexándrovich. This was that same *pristav* who was captured by the English and who, for his carelessness, was transferred from the Viborg to the Yamsky district. "Show me thy face!" and he drew the villain closer to get a fair view of him.

"Bah; why it is Petróvich!" he said, looking at the blood-bespattered face of the assassin. "Bah, what a face thou hast! Thou must have again worked mischief somewhere."

"Alexéy Alexándrovich, do not detain me; I must—"

"Go with me to the station; that is what thou must do, brother, and that without washing."

"Alexéy Alexándrovich, I will give you five hundred—"

"At once?"

"Yes, now."

"Then he must have it on his person, and I can take it from him at the station," concluded the worthy *pristav*. Then he added, pointing to the driver:

"Impossible, brother; we will see at the station what we can do for thee. Thou knowest well, dear brother, that I am always ready to help thee."

"Alexéy Alexándrovich, I beg you to let me go; otherwise something dreadful will happen."

"Ah, dost thou think so, uncle Petróvich?" said the *pristav*, nudging the driver.

Instantly, before the prisoner had time to collect his thoughts, the driver threw a noose around him, and the *pristav* signaled with his whistle.

In a moment there was a policeman at the side of the *pristav*.

"Get the cord and bind this fellow," was the *pristav's* order.

The policeman crossed Petróvich's hands on his back and tied them.

"Now get inside and hold this fellow fast." Then, turning to the driver, he said, "I suppose that he does not need the necktie now; he won't catch cold."

The driver removed the noose from the prisoner's neck, when he was about to choke.

"Alexéy Alexándrovich, I never expected that you would treat me in this way."

"Ah, dearest, many things happen which we do not expect; so it is not worth while thinking about it."

While the murderer was being taken to the station, the two persons whom he had pursued were far away. Natásha, to whom fear and despair had given wings, ran farther and farther from her pursuer Továrov, for it was he.

As the reader has already seen, Továrov had left the wine cellar with his nephew. Makárov had not told him anything of the object of his undertaking; he had merely ordered him to accompany him.

In his heart Továrov was not bad; he was a weak character, which often leads to unintended crime. Under other environments he would likely have been respected and beloved, but now he was despised and hated. He had scarcely reached his nineteenth year when he left the military school and was sent to a garrison in the Caucasus. To be in the garrison is not very cheerful at best, but to live in the small fortress in the Caucasus in those times, cut off on all sides by the unfriendly Circassians, was far worse. The officers were absolutely deprived of social intercourse, and the only means of relief from ennui was found in cards and *vodka*. Továrov, together with the rest, abandoned himself to play and drink. In the spring he obtained a furlough and went to the Kislovódsk Baths. This resort was always crowded

with military officers, the greater part of whom were veterans, whose only means of livelihood was gambling. These gentlemen lured Továrov into their toils and picked him clean of the little he had. Not being able to live on his salary, he resigned his commission and returned to Russia, where he immediately fell into the company of his cousin Makárov, and, together with him, soon passed through the whole school of crime.

Having spent the whole day in dissipation with Makárov, he followed him without asking where and for what purpose.

As soon as he saw Natásha emerging from the cellar he ran to overtake her, but drink had made his feet heavy, and increased the distance between them.

Pursuer and pursued had already left the deserted streets of the Yamsky district behind them. Natásha neared the Obvódny Canal, when she slipped and fell, striking against a stone, and lost consciousness.

Továrov saw her fall. He rushed to the spot where she lay, intending to carry her back to his cousin, but he found her too heavy for a drunken man.

"What must I do with her? I shall have to leave her here," he reflected. "In fact, what business is this of mine. Let Makárov pick her up himself. It is enough that I made a fool of myself in running after her. But where is my cousin. Perhaps he is waiting for me to bring her to him."

Továrov was on the point of leaving her, when his good heart asserted itself. "I cannot leave her

in this condition; she will die from cold. But where can I take her? It is too far to my room."

He noticed a bluish smoke not far away, through which a red flame appeared.

"This is lucky," he said to himself. "This is a sentry box." He went to the box, in front of which he found the sentry asleep, resting on his halberd. A cheerful fire was burning inside.

"Knight!" Továrov addressed the sentry.

"What is the matter?" cried the policeman, yawning.

"Knight, there is a woman lying on the ground yonder."

"Let her lie and sleep. She must be drunk."

"Please, knight, she will die from exposure," begged Továrov.

"That is all the same to me; she won't be the first to die that way."

"But, knight—" interposed Továrov.

"Go on," thundered the sentry, pushing him away with the butt of his halberd.

His companion, who was warming himself in the box, heard the talk and came out.

"What is the matter there?" he asked.

Továrov told him what he had already said to the other sentry.

"Where is she?" he asked of Továrov.

Továrov conducted him to the place where Natásha lay.

The sentry picked her up, carried her to the sentry box, put her down before the fire, and covered her with a sheep skin.

"So young and handsome," said the soldier, shaking his head, "and already wallows on the streets drunk. Yes, the world is becoming worse every day. It was not so when we were young."

Továrov then went home.

CHAPTER XII

CONSTANTINE BEFORE THE EMPEROR

A motley crowd surrounded the Winter Palace, eagerly seeking information about the Emperor's condition.

A second bulletin, signed by Doctors Mandt, Karrel, and Enokhin, appeared, but it was not encouraging. Different emotions stirred the crowds, but all feeling of discontent was replaced by an uneasiness, always awakened by uncertainty. The Russian national ambition feared the consequences which might follow the death of Nicholas, because of the foreboding that his successor would end the war by a humiliating peace.

Silence reigned in the interior of the palace; there was an ill-boding quiet and repose. Only whispering in a bated breath could be heard. The household did not wish to show indifference to the Emperor's illness and compromise themselves thereby in case of his recovery. On the other hand, they were afraid to show too much grief, for fear that they might be looked upon as inimical to the future ruler. All were afraid of each other, avoided one another, so as not to betray their feelings with a look or a movement.

Near the invalid Empress and her daughters, Marie and Olga, was the priest, endeavoring to encourage them and to prepare them for the inevitable.

In the Emperor's reception room were assembled his closest courtiers—his old friend Volkonsky, Kleinmichel, Perovsky, Adleberg, and other luminaries and champions of his illustrious reign.

The Tsarévich was agitated and pale. He sat in a chair, resting his head on his right hand, while his left hung listlessly at his side. His two younger brothers, Nikoláy and Mikhaíl, stood near him, but Constantine was not there—he was with his dying father.

"I know thy ambition. It is not unknown to me that thou dreamest of the crown, which the Almighty will soon take away from me to be handed over to thy older brother, my successor," said Nicholas.

"Father, you will live a long time yet; the crown will grace your brow for many years to come."

"Give me thy word of honor that thou wilt not attempt to keep thy brother from the throne."

Constantine kept silence.

"Thou art silent," continued Nicholas. "Then my suspicions are well-founded. I have watched thee long. Thy piety, over which thou art so conceited; thy Marble Palace, filled with old ikons which are revered by the *raskolniks;* thy relations to the troops; the money which thou spendest in paying officers' debts, all that is done to secure the good will and loyalty of the people and troops. But remember that the nobility, for whom thou hast more than

once expressed disregard, hate and fear thee. Thou, my son, art not like Alexander. Thou art endowed with energy and will, while he has inherited the kind and yielding character of his uncle, whose name thou bearest. I could wish thee for my oldest son, because Russia needs in this crisis a firm and strong arm to mend her fortunes. But God has decreed otherwise, and Alexander is my heir. He is thy oldest brother and thou must yield to him. Yes, perhaps to-day or to-morrow he will become Emperor, and I do not wish that my family should give an example of dissension. I do not wish that one of my sons should rise against the other. Promise me that thou wilt not undertake anything against thy brother. I know thee and am sure that once thou hast promised thou wouldst sooner have the walls of thy castle fall on thy head than to break thy word. Give me, then, thy word of honor; only that, I do not require an oath."

Constantine persisted in his silence.

"Constantine, think of what thou wouldst undertake. I have told thee already, and thou knowest it thyself, that the nobility is inimical to thee; it will remain on thy brother's side. The army will divide into two camps, and thou wilt be forced to depend on the people."

"But supposing that Alexander should voluntarily abdicate, for which course he has more than once expressed an intention?"

These were the first words uttered by Constantine.

The monarch wrinkled his brow, his eyes glistened and he replied in a thick, loud voice:

"He must not do it! It will be said that he was forced to it. He will not refuse the crown, dost thou hear me? I forbid him to do so. And should he abdicate in thy favor and ignore his children, there will arise factions. Factions in the Empire which I have erected, around the throne which I have made bright! In Russia, where the word of the Tsar must rule, no parties must raise their heads. I have spent my life to crush them here and in the rest of Europe, and I would not have it after I am dead that parties should be raised around my children as centers of contention. Alexander will be your Emperor, and you must obey him! Promise me this, Constantine. My son, my dear child, give me thy word."

The monarch's voice assumed a caressing tone which was seldom heard.

He seized his son's hand and pressed it. Constantine turned away his head, tears glistened in his eyes, and he bit his lips until they bled—but he remained silent.

"Constantine, I ask thee once more. Think of your poor sick mother. My death will grieve her much, and I only pray God that she may not follow me soon to the grave, but that she may be spared to guard my children. A quarrel between thee and thy brother would be her death. Constantine, willst thou become the murderer of thy mother?"

The proud and stubborn Constantine wept, but uttered not a word.

"Constantine, dost thou promise?"

"Father, I cannot give you a promise which will bind me forever. Many circumstances may arise—"

"Thou speakest of circumstances. Well, if a father's supplication cannot soften the heart of his son, he must act as an Emperor. I am still a monarch!"

At these words Nicholas reached for the whistle which was suspended from his bed.

"Father, what would you do?" exclaimed Constantine, frightened by the dark look in the Emperor's eyes.

"Have the confessor summoned to prepare thee for death. Within an hour the second son of a Russian Tsar will be shot on the fortress wall for daring to rebel against his monarch. Thou knowest this will not be the first instance in our family. I gave thee life, and have a right to take it."

"Father!" cried the Grand Duke. "Father!"

"I am no longer thy father, since the voice of the father has failed to move thee. I am now thy monarch and thy judge."

He rang the bell.

The Grand Duke knew that his father, like himself, never violated his given word. For a moment the demon of pride struggled in his heart, but better judgment prevailed, and seizing his father's hand he carried it to his lips, saying:

"I give you my word!"*

*Subsequently the Grand Duke Constantine Nicholáyevich violated this promise, and founded a secret society under the name of "Society of the Dead Head," the object of which was to first destroy all the children of Alexander II., and after that, Alexander himself. His plans were frustrated by a combination of circumstances.

The Emperor's anger vanished immediately. He pressed his son's hand firmly and said:

"I thank thee, Constantine. Thy word is sufficient. Now I can die in peace, for I know that thou willst not only not oppose thy brother, but aid and protect him."

CHAPTER XIII

NATÁSHA FINDS PROTECTION

Morning came and Natásha awoke from a deep sleep. The warmth and rest had produced a beneficial effect. The two old soldier-policemen had come three successive times to wake her, but could not rouse her without too rude a disturbance. She had spent three weeks in that wretched cellar, in horrible anxiety and distress, both mentally and physically. Thanks to her youth and health, she endured it, but now nature asserted itself. She yawned, stretched and, without uttering a word, fell asleep again and slept until evening. The sentries sympathized with her; she was young and pretty. She had the air and expression of a fine woman, as she was.

The hours passed on, and still she slept. The sentries looked at her from time to time.

"Poor child," one would say, "if she would only wake, I would give her some of our *shchý* before it gets cold."

Another would answer:

"Let her sleep; I'll put the *shchý* near the fire."

The Russian people—and the soldiers are part of them—show great sympathy in the affliction of their

kindred, which cannot be said of the upper world, which turns a deaf ear to poverty and misfortune.

At 11 o'clock the girl awoke, moved her hand across her forehead, and murmured:

"Where am I?" looking around in amazement.

"What, *golúbka,* hast thou finally waked? Thou must be hungry. Here is some *shchý;* we prepared it for thee."

"Porfírich," he called to his companion, who was on watch outside. "Hey, Porfírich, what hast thou done with the bottle of *vodka;* let the girl have some to sober up."

"Where am I? How did I get here?" she asked again, putting her hand to her forehead and trying to remember.

"We will talk of that later. Now eat. But wait, first drink a glass of *vodka;* that will strengthen thee."

The girl shook her head. "I do not drink *vodka.*"

The soldier reddened to the ears. He called to his companion:

"Did I not tell thee, old *bolván,* that she does not drink *vodka?*"

"Well, that is all the same to me, thou hadst better give me the bottle; I want a drink."

The old soldier did as his companion wished, and whispered in his ear:

"I said she was not drunk."

"Indeed? Didst thou really say so?"

"All right," interrupted Pávlich, and returned to the sentry box.

Natásha ate the *shchý* with apparent relish, while the sentry regarded her with a look of satisfaction.

"Ah, *golúbka,* thou hast been hungry a long time. Eat, eat." And he glided out of the sentry box.

"Where art thou going?" asked Porfírich.

"Our *golúbka* is hungry; I'll run over to the store for some sausage."

Old Pávlich soon returned with sausage for his protégé, and herring for himself and his companion.

Natásha ate the sausage, saying:

"Thank you, good people, thank you."

"Wouldst thou perhaps have something else? Do not hesitate, the store is only two steps distant."

The girl became drowsy again, and fell into a half sleep, during which she heard the following conversation between the sentries:

"What do you think? Who could have stabbed the rascal in the Yamsky yesterday?"

"The thieves must have quarreled among themselves."

"I have often said that Makárov would end that way."

The girl heard the name distinctly.

"And who else could have done it but Petróvich. Alexéy Alexándrovich met him there all covered with blood."

The following morning the girl awoke completely restored, but along with her strength came also the consciousness of her condition. What was she to do? What was she to say when asked who she was and where she came from? She began to cry.

"What art thou crying about?" asked Porfírich.

She told him her story from the time Prince Kurdyubékov was strangled to the time she escaped from the cellar. She described her sufferings in such a graphic manner that poor Porfírich wiped his eyes with his sleeve more than once.

"Pávlich," he said to his companion outside, "I am an old fool. I cried like a woman over her story. What business is it of mine, anyway?"

Pávlich handed him the halberd, saying:

"Now, you watch in my place, and I will go and question the girl."

The old fellow had determined to interrogate her exhaustively, but he did not succeed. He had a sympathetic heart, and was moved no less than his companion.

"What is thy name?" he asked.

"Natásha," she answered.

"And what else?"

"I am called Natásha; that is all."

"What is thy father's name?"

"My father? I never had a father, or rather he never wanted to be my father."

"Where did you come from?"

Natásha shuddered at this question. Should she acknowledge that she was Makárov's bondswoman? or should she show him the release given her by Prince Odoyévsky, which she had in her possession? If she revealed the facts they would discover the secret of the house in the Viborg district, and this would cause the ruin of the Prince, Savelyév, Dostoyévsky, and many others. She knew this too well, and was therefore silent.

"Well, where art thou from?" again asked Pávlich.

A happy thought came into her mind.

"How am I to know?" she replied. "It is far, very far from here. Do peasants remember names? It took me a long time to walk here—weeks, months. I repeat, knight, that I come from a great distance."

"Yes, mother Russia is very large," was the wise remark of the old sentry. "But why didst thou leave thy native place? Hast thou, then, no relatives?"

Natásha then told him that she was the daughter of a French woman; that is, of a free woman. She described, without mentioning names, how Makárov persecuted her; how she ran away with Savelyév; how she had lost him and again found him a little while before the murder of Kurdyubékov.

Pávlich went outside and counseled long with Porfírich. He then went to a tea shop and returned with a large potful of tea, which he placed before the girl.

"Drink this, girl; it will warm thee up."

Never before did Natásha drink tea with such relish as in that filthy sentry box.

"Natásha," began the old soldier, but stopped short, jumped up and ran to his companion, with whom he had a long talk. At last he came back.

"Natásha, we cannot act otherwise—" He hesitated. "We must take thee to the police station."

"To the station!" exclaimed the terrified girl. She threw herself on her knees and began to wring her hands in despair.

"Let me go! You are good and sympathetic people. Why should you want to make me miserable? You will not do it, will you?" And she began to kiss Porfírich's knees.

He raised the girl and seated her on the bench.

"Sit down, *golúbka,*" he said, biting his lips to keep from crying. "We will arrange it somehow."

After some reflection, he said:

"Now, wipe the tears away, *golúbka.* Thou canst not remain here. I will take thee to Márya Andréyevna. Let us go."

She followed him without asking any questions.

On reaching the door she stopped a moment, and seizing Porfírich's hand in both of her own, she said:

"May God reward thee for what thou hast done for poor Natásha!"

"Never mind that. God be with thee!" he mumbled, turning his head away so that the girl could not see the tears which welled up in his eyes.

It was ten o'clock and the streets were filled with people. Now and then some one would stop to look at a girl walking with a policeman.

"So young and already fallen," remarked some, thinking that she was being conducted to the station.

On one of the streets appeared a yellow box on four wheels, a pitiful imitation of a carriage, drawn by a stout mare which bolted every once in a while under the blows of the knout. Behind the equipage followed a soldier, with a musket on his shoulder, and from the little window in the rear of the box two bold eyes were looking out.

"This is a criminal who is being taken from jail to the station for examination," explained Pávlich to Natásha.

Suddenly her name was called from the box.

She shuddered and cowered in terror close to the policeman.

"That is he," she said, looking into the opening of the box.

"Who?" asked the sentry.

But before she could answer, the following words, accompanied by loud laughter, was heard from the box:

"Aha, thou, girl, also! Very well, then we will soon meet again."

"That was Petróvich. Dost thou then know the old rogue?"

Natásha was silent a moment and then, trembling in every joint, she said:

"He had a hand in the murder of Prince Kurdyubékov. It was he who kept me a prisoner in the cellar. Save me from this horrible man! I can yet feel the knife over my head which he flourished at me. If the Smolensk Mother of God had not heard my prayer, the door would not have opened itself, and he would surely have killed me."

"So it was he that wanted to kill thee? But how did it happen that he killed Makárov instead of thee?"

"Did he kill Makárov?" exclaimed Natásha.

"How, dost thou know that knave, also?" asked the soldier.

"He is my father's son. It was he who persecuted me with declarations of love and with such threats that I was compelled to run away. He, too, took a part in the murder of the good Prince."

They reached the castle of the former lover of Catherine II., now deserted, and stopped at a yellow stone house, which faced on the Neva.

"Here is where Márya Andréyevna lives," said the policeman.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GOOD MÁRYA ANDRÉYEVNA

Widows, orphans, and the unfortunates, without exception, spoke of Márya Andréyevna as of a saint, and blessed her name. Her charities were inexhaustible, and where she could not help with money alone, she aided through her connections, which were also unbounded. She was not a professional philanthropist, but a kind and sympathetic woman.

This was what was told about her. Many years ago she married a rich old man. One evening, on the occasion of the christening of their only son, with the powerful Arakchéyev as godfather, all the great nobles assembled at her home to partake of a feast. At the moment when the glasses were filled to drink to the health of the host, his absence was observed. They looked for him everywhere, but in vain. The guests departed, amazed at the occurrence. On the following day Márya Andréyevna found him, with his throat cut, in the same spot where a short time before Lord Castlereigh had killed himself. From that time she devoted herself to the son. At the age of ten the boy disappeared mysteriously and was never heard from again. The mother's heart was broken, but, instead of giving way to grief and despair, she became a mother to all

unfortunates. Her great wealth and social connections made such an undertaking possible.

Her door was open to all; it was therefore not difficult for the policeman to reach her with his protégé.

She received them graciously and asked:

"What can I do for you?" in a voice expressing kindness and sympathy.

Natásha kept silence. She could not have expressed what she felt, yet something indefinable drew her to the lady who regarded her with such tenderness and affection. Porfírich twisted his cap in his hands in embarrassment.

"What do you wish?" again asked Márya Andréyevna.

Both visitors continued in silence.

The good lady was used to like scenes, and waited patiently for them to take courage and state the object of their call.

But Porfírich suddenly put on his cap, saluted in military fashion, and proclaimed aloud:

"I have the honor to report—an unfortunate!"

Saying this, he turned around quickly and left the room.

Márya Andréyevna could not resist smiling at his manner, but the smile disappeared at the sight of the girl crying, on her knees.

She rose and gently raised Natásha.

"Rise, my child! One should kneel only before God, and not before a fellow-creature."

She seated her on a sofa and sat down at her side.

No one better understands how to win the confidence of the unfortunate than a good woman. In a short time Natásha had communicated the story of her unhappy life. She even acknowledged her love for Savelyév.

At the name of Kurdyubékov the kind lady became eagerly attentive. She had known him well, for he was her competitor in good deeds.

"Thou sayest, my child, that he was forced to sign that will?"

"Yes; they traced his hand on the paper by force."

"Dost thou know Prince Odoyévsky?"

Natásha hesitated, for fear of revealing the secret of the conspirators.

The good woman noticed this, and said:

"Do not fear me, my child. I must know the whole truth, else I shall not know how to aid thee."

Natásha then told her everything.

Márya Andréyevna embraced her, and said:

"Rest contented, my child; I shall not abandon thee until thy grief has been changed to happiness."

She then went to a writing table and wrote:

"Dear Prince: I am expecting you; come as soon as you can."

She rang the bell. The footman entered.

"Take this to Prince Odoyévsky at once!" ordered the good lady.

CHAPTER XV

AT THE EMPEROR'S DEATH BED

Bazhánov stood near the dying Emperor, listening to his last words.

"God will forgive my transgressions, for I sought the welfare of my people," said Nicholas.

"Man's will is the creature of his weakness. The most faithful of the Saviour's disciples denied Him three times," observed the confessor.

"I pray to Almighty God in repentance. All that I did, I believed to be for the good of my people. If I made mistakes, I am but human, and God is merciful; there is no limit to His love."

"Has Your Majesty no other wishes, or do you not desire to make some other acknowledgment before partaking of the sacrament? Confess your sins, and Almighty God will forgive you, even as I declare you forgiven."

"At present I am not Tsar, but a penitent. I told thee, father, everything which is on my conscience. Olympiada—"

"I will transmit to her your farewell and commands."

"My commands?" said the Emperor sadly. "Within a few hours I will turn into dust, and another will command where I have ruled."

"What do you desire done for your son?"

"Which one?" harshly asked the monarch.

"The soldier, why—"

"The son of Márya Assénkova?" interrupted the Emperor. "I have arranged this matter, as thou knowest, but he must not remain in Russia—"

"Does Your Majesty not wish to see him?"

"Dost thou really think that I, lying on my death bed, would consent to see any one except my lawful children and wife? Father, wouldst thou really wish me to do so? Wouldst thou indeed dare make such request of me? A few days since I would have rejoiced to see him. Perhaps something in his features would have brought Márya Assénkova back to me. But now—"

"Shall I tell him anything in the name of Your Majesty?"

"From me? No! Tell him not to cherish the thought that he is my son. What I did for him was done purely from pity for his young years. Was the girl whom he brought with him to the city found?"

"No, Your Majesty."

"Should she be found, give her this ring." Nicholas took the ring off his finger and handed it to the priest. "An opal is the symbol of tears; may it become a symbol of happiness and joy for her. Father, she loved the wounded soldier. If she still loves him, she must become his wife; otherwise she is to go into a cloister. I put a paper writing in the medallion of this ring, which will secure her admission in a holy retreat. Give the soldier my blessing, the blessing of a father. Now, give me thy benediction."

Bazhánov made the sign of the cross on the Emperor's forehead and blessed him, whispering a prayer.

"Now call in the Empress and my children."

The priest obeyed, and the Empress entered soon after with the children.

Who could describe the scene of grief and despair at that meeting?

Before the Emperor's bed knelt the children and grandchildren, while the Empress was stooping over his head with her lips on his forehead.

"Alexandra, for nearly forty years we have lived together, sharing equally in happiness and grief. The storm had just passed when we were united, and we are to part in a storm at last. Now, Alexandra, thou must take my place in the care of our children. My good and faithful consort, farewell! And you, my children, do not forget that your mother has sacrificed her health for me. You will not forget it. Alexander, thou art endowed with a kindly heart, and it is with consolation and confidence that I intrust to thee my wife—thy mother."

The pen refuses to describe the scenes which followed. The Tsar was no longer a monarch, but a loving father. He alone kept up his courage, while all the rest were unnerved, although the tears streamed down his cheeks.

The Emperor blessed his wife and children and repeated to them:

"Good-by forever! No, not forever; we shall meet again in another world." Then, sealing a

farewell kiss on their foreheads, "Good-by! Now I have done with earth and belong to Heaven alone."

It was necessary to remove the members of the family from the chamber by force.

"Alexander, remain thou with me; I shall give thee my last breath," said Nicholas to his oldest son.

He called back the Grand Duke Constantine, to whom he said:

"Kneel down, my son, that I may give thee my blessing once more."

After blessing him the second time, he said in a solemn voice, "I thank thee, my son, I thank thee."

When the family had all gone out, the confessor entered in full regalia, accompanied by the palace church clergy, and the monarch partook of the holy sacrament in the presence of his son Alexander.

"Holy father," said the Emperor, "I have now made my peace with God. I die a Christian as I have lived—an orthodox Christian and defender of the holy faith."

"May God forgive thee thy transgressions, my son, even as I declare thee forgiven now, in His name," said the confessor.

The priest went out, and Alexander remained with his father about half an hour. He came out pale and haggard, and went staggering to his mother's apartments.

The Empress, in a white dress, and the crown on her head, awaited him on the steps of the door.

On his entering she removed the crown from her head and placed it at his feet.

In that moment the Empress was more a mother than a wife.

CHAPTER XVI

KLEINMICHEL SHORN OF HIS POWER

The prime minister walked the floor of his room impatiently. He did not intend to go to the Winter Palace before learning of the success or failure of the favorite. Every fifteen minutes he received by wire a report of the Emperor's condition, which became more and more alarming with every succeeding dispatch. Now and then he would stop before the instrument which connected his room with that of the Emperor. He hoped to receive a summons to appear before the Emperor at once. He did not receive one.

At last the snow creaked under the wheels of a carriage, which stopped at the landing of the mansion. He put his face to the window and recognized the favorite's carriage by the light of the moon. He resumed pacing the floor in full confidence that she would soon send for him. Time passed on, but no summons from Nelídova. Dark thoughts tortured him.

He went uninvited to her apartments, and ordered to be announced.

At this moment the officer who had handed her over to her waitingmaid came out of Nelídova's apartments.

"What are you doing here, Polovzev?" asked the Count.

"I had the honor of escorting Mademoiselle Nelìdova home by order of the Emperor," he answered quietly.

"You? How did that happen?" asked the Count of the officer, regarding him fixedly, as if seeking to read the depth of his soul.

"Mademoiselle Nelídova is not feeling well," he answered, saluting, and took his leave.

The Count looked in the parlor of his kinswoman. Mademoiselle Nelídova was lying on a couch and her waitingmaids were endeavoring to restore her to consciousness.

At last she sighed deeply and opened her eyes. She muttered disconnected and unintelligible words.

The Count sent out the maids.

"What happened, Olympiada Arkádyevna?" he asked.

"Who speaks? Where am I?" asked the favorite.

"Collect yourself," he said, roughly seizing her hand.

"They drove me out; yes, he drove me out like a street woman."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Count.

"He forbade me to ever return to the palace."

"Then you have talked with him?" asked the Count, white with rage.

"No; he would not see me. He caused me to be led out of his palace by the servants."

The Count heard no more. He left the house and in a few minutes was at the Winter Palace. He

mounted the steps quickly. At the door he was stopped by the guard officer, who said in a courteous but firm voice:

"Pardon me, your excellency, you cannot enter without being announced. Such is His Majesty's orders."

"But this order surely does not apply to me."

"Pardon me; it applies to all without exception."

"Then, may I trouble you, Baron, to announce me?"

The adjutant bowed and entered the Emperor's room, from whence he returned almost immediately.

"I regret to have to report to your excellency that the Emperor cannot see you."

"What? Did the Emperor say so? Are you not mistaken, Baron?" asked the Count, choking from rage.

"Of course, your excellency, His Majesty pleased to say that you would be called when he wishes to see you."

This conversation was carried on in a loud voice, and attracted the attention of all present. Kleinmichel noticed their ironical smiles, and not wishing to remain among those who formerly trembled before him but now mocked him, he left the palace, doubling his fists in powerless rage. It was the fury of a tiger deprived of his teeth and claws.

CHAPTER XVII

DOSTOYÉVSKY'S WIFE IN DISTRESS

The oars struck out in rhythmic measure over the transparent waters of the Neva, and the Tsar's courier boat glided rapidly over the distance which divided the Winter Palace from the Petropávlovsk Fortress. But however quickly the boat moved, it seemed to the young woman who was seated in it that she was creeping at a snail's pace, for she was carrying liberty and safety to her husband.

At last the oars were raised and the boat, directed by an experienced hand, after making a semi-circle, stopped at the stone steps of the harbor.

The young woman almost ran to the commandant's headquarters. The adjutant, who accompanied her by order of the Tsar, could scarcely keep the pace with her.

After the usual formalities, the commandant, shaking his head, said:

"Dostoyévsky? I do not know such a name."

He called the chief of the headquarters, but he only shook his head more significantly.

The adjutant became impatient and said:

"Your excellency, please make haste; I have not time for delay. This note from the Tsar is sufficient to show that he is here."

The commandant again counseled with his chief, and he with his assistant; the assistant turned to the director, the director to the chief clerk, and so on down to the assistant clerk.

All shook their heads; no one knew a prisoner by the name of Dostoyévsky.

The adjutant lost his patience at last.

"In that case I shall report to His Majesty that the political prisoner Dostoyévsky, who was committed here by order of Prince Orlóv, disappeared without trace."

"What the devil has become of that prisoner?" thundered the commandant. "He must be here, since His Majesty pleases to speak of him. If you fail to find this Dostoyévsky at once, I will send you all where Makár does not drive calves!"*

They eyed each other, trembling, and again began to examine the books. At last one of the old clerks approached the commandant with repeated bows and a book in his hand.

"Here is the name of Dostoyévsky, committed in the fortress by the gendarme division on December 14, 1855, under No. 7569."

"Call the jailer!" ordered the commandant.

"What prisoners were committed on the 14th of December?" he was asked.

The jailer answered that he did not remember, since many prisoners had been brought in lately, and that he would have to consult his book.

**Gdyé Makár telyát nye gonáyet* is a Russian idiom, meaning to go to a distant place; often used of people sent to Siberia.

"*Durak* (fool)," said the commandant, "go and get your book immediately!"

The jailer returned at last with the book, from which he read a large number of the cells which were occupied on that day.

The tortures of the unfortunate young woman may be imagined.

The adjutant's patience was exhausted, and turning to her, he said:

"Let us go! I will take you to Prince Orlóv."

He offered her his arm, and they went together to the Prince. They found him, but he was at the court and could not be seen for the rest of the day.

"Be assured," the adjutant said to the young woman while he was escorting her to her house, "that I will see to it that your husband is returned to you as early as possible."

CHAPTER XVIII

PRINCE ODOYÉVSKY CALLS ON MÁRYA ANDRÉYEVNA

"You have done me the honor to send for me, Márya Andréyevna," said Prince Odoyévsky, courteously bowing before the lady.

"Yes, I wanted to surprise you."

"A surprise for me? You excite my curiosity."

"Be patient; your curiosity will soon be gratified. First tell me if you have any news from your father."

"Yes; I heard from him recently through a friend."

"Well, how is his health?"

"What can be expected after thirty years of wretched slavery, far away from his dear fatherland?"

"Is there no hope of a pardon?"

"A pardon? Is the word mercy known to the Emperor?"

"Be still!" warned the careful Márya Andréyevna.

"Very well. But you spoke of a surprise."

"Have you the will of Prince Kurdyubékov?"

"Yes, but unfortunately it is worthless, for there is another one."

"The other one is a forgery."

"I know it too well, but how can I prove it?"

"Who gave you the will?"

"Dostoyévsky and a soldier named Savelyév."

"Do you know that soldier Savelyév?"

"Not very well, but what I know of him is of the very best."

"Who is appointed heir in Kurdyubékov's will, which is in your possession?"

"Two-thirds of his property he left to the poor, and one-third to a young girl who ran away from the provinces to come to the city."

"Have you ever seen that girl?"

"Only once."

"Have you not given her her freedom as if she were your bondswoman?"

The Prince shuddered. "Who told you that?" he asked excitedly.

"Do not be alarmed," said the good lady. "You have a noble heart, and are a worthy son of your noble father."

She left the room and returned, leading Natásha by the hand.

Natásha trembled for joy at sight of the Prince.

The Prince approached her with a pleasant expression and said:

"Ah, you here, Mademoiselle Natásha? I am delighted to see you in such good hands."

"So you know each other," said Márya Andréyevna. "But why do you not tell her where her soldier is? You surely see that she is consumed with impatience to learn something about him."

"I regret not to be able to gratify your wish. Since the night of his call at my house with Dostoyévsky, I have not seen him."

Natásha turned pale, and tears bedewed her eyes.

The girl told the Prince all that took place at Prince Kurdyubékov's house on the night of the murder, and what happened to herself.

"What is to be done?" he said, reflecting. "I see no way out of the labyrinth."

Márya Andréyevna then said:

"I know a way out of it. I will go with Natásha to Prince Orlóv, and tell him all the facts in the case."

CHAPTER XIX

SAVELYÉV FINDS NATÁSHA

Loud-ringing church bells announced to the capital of Russia the sad news of the death of the Emperor. The whole city went into mourning. Groups assembled on the streets discussing the possibilities of the new reign.

Savelyév walked across the Nevsky with a quick step. As before, he still wore the soldier garb, but there was a change in his expression and manners. He no longer avoided the crowds. On the contrary he seemed to seek them out, looking proud and bold as if wishing to say: "I am no longer an outcast; I am your equal, and as free as you are!"

Savelyév was going to Sergievsky street in hopes of learning from Dostoyévsky where Natásha was.

He had nothing to be afraid of now. Archpresbyter Bazhánov had handed him a note, signed by the Emperor himself, which granted him not only a full pardon for all the past, but which also gave him a yearly pension of twelve thousand rubles.

He reached Dostoyévsky's house and entered. Dostoyévsky's wife rushed to him in excited expectancy.

"Ah, Savelyév!" she cried. "Where do you come from? From the fortress?"

Savelyév looked at her, bewildered.

"From the fortress?" he repeated slowly.

"Yes; why did you not bring my husband with you?"

"Is your husband, then, in the fortress?"

"Yes, but he is free now. Here is the note written by the Emperor himself, giving him his freedom."

"Have you seen Natásha lately?" Savelyév asked confusedly.

"Natásha? Which Natásha?" asked the young woman, whose thoughts were centered on her husband.

"My affianced girl," answered Savelyév.

"Your fiancée?" exclaimed the young woman. "How can you be so cruel as to wish to marry?"

The soldier began to doubt her sanity.

"Yes," she continued, "to marry a young girl; to make her unhappy forever. Surely there is nothing but sorrow for a girl who marries. She only becomes her husband's temporary amusement, while he is the object of all her care and anxiety and of her every thought."

At that moment the snow creaked under the slides of a sledge in front of the house. It was the adjutant who had come to take her to Prince Orlóv.

He looked at Savelyév, greeting him in military fashion.

"Who art thou?" asked the adjutant.

The word "thou" stung the soldier deeply. Although he had become accustomed to it from childhood, he chafed under the appellation.

"My name is Savelyév, and I am a discharged soldier," he replied harshly.

"Thou art the one who was in the palace guard-house?"

"Just so," he replied.

"Aha!" he said, and turning to Dostoyévsky's wife, he asked:

"Well, shall we drive over to Prince Orlóv?"

"Yes, certainly!" she exclaimed. "He will give me back my husband."

The young woman went away with the adjutant.

Dostoyévskaya was received by Prince Orlóv at once.

The Prince was looking over some reports while Márya Andréyevna and Natásha were seated before him.

"You may go now," he said, bowing gallantly and turning to Márya Andréyevna. "You may rest assured that I will see that the matter is carefully investigated."

The two ladies rose and were bowing themselves out when Dostoyévskaya entered the room.

She uttered a loud cry at the sight of Natásha.

The girl, who had not noticed Dostoyévskaya, heard the cry and stopped for a moment, but her companion drew her out of the room.

The Prince continued to turn over the papers before him, and turning to Dostoyévskaya he said:

"What do you wish?"

The adjutant advanced near him and whispered something in his ear.

The Prince shrugged his shoulders. "I am very sorry, but I can do nothing for you in this matter."

"Nothing?" asked the adjutant. "Here is the Emperor's order.

"I do not doubt that," replied the Prince, "but Dostoyévsky is no longer in St. Petersburg. He was sent to Siberia a week ago. Good-by."

Crushed, appalled, and more dead than alive, the young woman staggered out of the room, accompanied by the adjutant.

The Prince called the officer back.

He re-entered the room, while Natásha and Márya Andréyevna cared for the unfortunate woman.

"I did not wish to tell you in the presence of Dostoyévsky's wife," said the Prince. "Her husband is dead. He reached Schlüsselburg, where he died."

The poor woman had become unconscious in the meantime, falling into the arms of Natásha.

Savelyév, who was waiting at Dostoyévsky's house for the return of the young woman, in order to learn the result of her interview with the Prince, saw a carriage drive up and stop at the gate.

The footman opened the carriage door and endeavored to lift the unconscious woman out, but the task was too much for his years. Savelyév rushed to aid him, when a scream from the carriage obliged him to look inside, where he saw his Natásha.

CHAPTER XX

THE POLICE COURT

"Thou art called Petróvich," asked the police inspector.

Petróvich was silent.

The inspector dealt him a powerful blow on the cheek. Petróvich reeled and blood gushed out of his mouth.

Such were the barbarous customs at examinations of prisoners. Unfortunately, these methods still prevail.

"Wilt thou answer?" thundered the inspector.

"What use is there in my answering?" said Petróvich, quietly wiping the blood from his face. "You have no cause to strike me. I will answer all proper questions, without having my teeth knocked out."

"We know thee too well, Petróvich."

Petróvich turned aside as if he were not spoken to.

"And so thou wilt not acknowledge that thou hast murdered Prince Kurdyubékov first and Makárov afterwards?"

The murderer looked at him bewildered, scratching the back of his neck as if he did not understand what was asked of him.

"Kurdyubékov?" he mumbled. "Who is that? This is the first time I have heard the name. And

the other one, what did you call him? Makárov, Makárov?" he slowly repeated, as if forgetting. "I don't know him. I used to know a certain Makar in my village, but I don't know any Makárov. No, your excellency, I positively don't know any one of that name."

The inspector struck him again in the face. The prisoner wiped off the blood as before, and said:

"Beat me, your excellency; it is your privilege to beat us common people. But I don't know any Makárov."

The inspector then went out and returned, accompanied by a lady, heavily veiled, and a young man.

The rattle of chains was heard as young Kurdyubékov appeared.

A moment later Továrov was brought in.

"Do you recognize the accused?" the inspector asked of Natásha.

"Yes," she replied.

"Have they all taken part in the murder of Prince Kurdyubékov?" continued the inspector.

"No; only two of them."

"Which ones?"

She pointed to Petróvich and young Kurdyubékov.

"Now, do you acknowledge that you have killed the Prince Kurdyubékov?"

"Who dares to accuse me of killing my father?" boldly asked the young man. Such charges are not to be made in secret under the protection of a veil. Let the accuser show her face, and I will understand how to meet her charges."

"Would you be so good as to lift your veil for a moment?" asked the inspector of Natásha. "The assassins will perhaps confess, once they have seen your face."

Natásha lifted her veil.

Terror was depicted on the faces of the murderers, but they remained silent.

"Please state what you know of this case," said the inspector, turning to Natásha.

She described the terrible night in which her protector was murdered in her presence; the horrible days and nights which she spent in the cellar as the captive of Petróvich; her escape, and her collapse on the street.

"Which of you pursued her that night of her escape from the cellar?" asked the inspector of the criminals.

"I," answered Továrov.

He then made a frank statement of all he knew of this matter, which fully corroborated the girl's story.

EPILOGUE

The sound of the bells announcing the death of the Emperor was hushed, and St. Petersburg once more assumed its customary air. Alexander did not conclude peace with the allied powers, as it was supposed that he would do, and news from the seat of war was again eagerly looked for. At the request of the Empress-mother, the new ruler retained all the ministers who were connected with the rule of Nicholas during the last months of his reign. But one of them, one only, he could not forgive for the insults he had heaped upon him. In less than two weeks he was replaced by Chavkin.

Count Orlóv gave Kleinmichel to understand in secret that it was intended to bring him to trial for misappropriating the funds belonging to the construction of the Moscow-St. Petersburg Railway.

Since the death of his protector the former all-powerful minister never appeared at the Palace, and the court was greatly surprised to see him one day walking proudly through the apartments and asking to be announced to the Emperor.

"Kleinmichel here?" exclaimed Alexander, stamping his foot.

"State to His Majesty that I wish to lay before him a very important matter with reference to the memory of the late Emperor."

These words immediately opened the doors of the Emperor's cabinet to the fallen minister.

"Your Majesty," said Kleinmichel, "I have heard that I am to be placed on trial."

"Yes; the appalling peculations which were practiced in connection with the construction of the Moscow Railway must be examined and made public."

"Your Majesty, I make bold to remark that the memory of the late Emperor may suffer by such procedure."

"The memory of my father?" cried Alexander furiously. "How darest thou speak thus?"

"Your Majesty," quietly answered the former minister, "the largest part of the money assigned to the construction of the railroad went into the private purse of His Majesty.

"Thou liest!" thundered the Emperor.

"Your Majesty, here is the Emperor's letter, in which he orders me to place thirty millions in French and English securities in the name of Mademoiselle Nelídova and her children, and to charge this expense to the construction of the railroad."

Alexander ran over the letter.

"Thou mayest go!" he said.

Kleinmichel made a deep bow and went out.

On the following day he received an appointment in the Imperial Council. He was not brought to trial.

Nelídova was ordered to take up her residence with the children on her estate in Tambov Province.

The ring with the opal was transmitted to Natásha by the archpriest. Within the medallion, where the poison had been, was a check for five thousand rubles to be deposited in the Moscow Novodyevichy Monastery in case of her becoming a nun. She had no need of the money, for she was the happy bride of Savelyév.

She also refused to accept the money left her by Prince Kurdyubékov. This money, together with the rest of his estate, went to the poor and for good works generally.

In obedience to the late Emperor's wishes, Savelyév was obliged to leave Russia, and he therefore hastened his marriage. Three weeks after the Emperor's death the union between Savelyév and Natásha was modestly solemnized in the Vsyekh Skorbyaschikh Church.

Márya Andréyevna served as Natásha's bridesmaid, while the old sentry, Porfírich, who had been promoted, together with his comrade, to the rank of sergeant, served as groom to Savelyév. Savelyév was assigned the post of secretary at one of the small Prussian consulates.

Subsequently he was appointed Russian consul at one of the French seaports, where he now lives, surrounded by his wife, Natásha, and numerous children.

Natásha turned over the money left her by the Emperor to the wife of Dostoyévsky, who entered the Novodyevichy Monastery at Moscow, where she still lives, praying for her husband's soul. Her days are numbered—grief has shattered her vital powers.

The opal ring can be seen in the church of the monastery, among other precious gifts, attached to the ikon of the Holy Mother of Kazan.

The beating of drums was heard in the streets leading to Konnaya Ploschad (Horse Square). A platoon of soldiers marched through the streets guarding three green boxes on wheels with convicts. The escort was taking them to the gallows which was prepared on the square. Despite the early hour, a great crowd had already assembled.

An interesting spectacle was to be enacted there. Prince Kurdyubékov, Petróvich, and Sherwood had been found guilty of murder. The Prince was to be publicly disgraced. His noble origin exempted him from punishment with the knout, to which his accomplices were subjected.

The Prince walked out of his green box with a firm step. Like the other two criminals, he was dressed in a long black caftan, with a small board over his breast, on which was written *"otzeubítza"* (slayer of his father), while on the boards of the other two there was only *"ubítza"* (murderer).

He was tied to the disgraceful post* and an officer read the sentence of the court. The executioner then approached him, struck a blow on his cheek, and broke a sword on his head. He was deprived of all rights and sentenced to be exiled to Siberia at hard labor in the mines for life.

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*The "disgraceful post" stands upon the scaffold, provided with rings and chains. The convict's hands are thrust through the rings, and he is fastened so that he cannot move.

At the base of the scaffold stood his two accomplices. Sherwood, ghastly pale, shuddered in every joint, while Petróvich was indifferently eyeing the "white horse"* on which he was about to be placed.

"This is no great misfortune, after all," said Petróvich to his companion. "True, it is quite painful, but one does not always die from it, and a drink of *vodka* tastes a hundred times more palatable after the execution."

The erstwhile Prince Kurdyubékov was removed from the scaffold, and the name of Sherwood was called.

Pale as death, the spy-murderer ascended the scaffold, and the air was soon filled with his pitiful cries.

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*The popular name of a bench on which the flogging of criminals is administered.

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